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MARTIN FFRENCH

BY

JOHN BRADSHAW,

AUTHOR OF "DEDHAM PARK," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PART I.

MARTIN FFRENCH.

CHAPTER I.

CHUDLEGH.

Most people will remember to have seen one or more of those south-country landscapes which artists are so fond of reproducing on their canvas—the threatening clouds, massing in an otherwise clear sky; the dark shadows, flitting over the distant plain; the stiff breeze, hurtling amongst the autumnal-tinted foliage; the harvest-field, bright with yellow stubble, and thick with well-headed stooks of ripening corn; and for a foreground, the busy gleaner, collecting the scattered wheat-ears, with which

to make a few poor loaves—most people will recall the picture.

And about the village of Chudlegh, a scene, identical in all respects, might have been witnessed on any fine autumnal afternoon, at least, some forty years ago, and ere a more grasping husbandry, necessitated by increased rents and a sterner economy, had closed its wide gates to the poor. But, when this tale opens, the gates had not been closed, and gleaners still peopled the many cornfields.

In fact, forty years ago Chudlegh was considered behind the times. No railway had brought it into contact with that more active life which surged about it. Forty years ago, many of its inhabitants had never crossed the parochial boundaries; and the bi-weekly carrier's cart, with now and then a stray wagon, freighted with its heavy load, gave the sole means by which its cottagers could visit their market-

town. "It is down in the clays," said the outer world; and to be down in the clays was the greatest slur which dwellers on the chalky downs, lying to the north and south, could cast in its teeth.

"And are the roads good?" a stranger, who wished to explore its beauties, might inquire.

"Well—yes," the dweller on the downs was bound to reply. "Of late, they have been vastly improved, though, less than a dozen years ago eight horses could not force a carriage through them. But Chudlegh! —don't think of going to Chudlegh, a cockneyfied place, in which a square column, crowned by a large brick pineapple, is the one object of interest, and stands surrounded by small, pretentious villas; and where a solitary yew-tree, tall as any maypole, displays a scanty top, the which is clipped into the semblance of a bird. No, don't go to Chudlegh!

There's nothing to be seen there, and it's in the very centre of the clays."

Forty years ago, the self-satisfied dwellers on the downs delighted in bespattering poor Chudlegh with its own mud. But the villagers regarded not their sneers. They retorted that its clay grew better wheat than the chalky downs or sandy soil which cropped out between their parish and the market-town; that few country places could boast so wide a common, level as a bowling-green, and covered with rich, short turf—a common studded at the proper season with plump geese, and thick with cricketers on a Sunday afternoon. And forty years ago—when old Mr. Mathews, the rector, with Squire Ffrench upon his arm, came to watch the players and talk to the farmers after reading evensong to a sparse congregation in the old church; when the village alehouse was not closed during the hours of service, and beer flowed

freely on the cricket-ground — Chudlegh turned out an eleven of which it might well be proud, which proved a formidable opponent to the neighbouring parishes, and furnished the county team with several of its best players. And a curious fact about the Chudlegh eleven was, that it contained nine left-handed batsmen, and two or three dangerous left-handed bowlers —a circumstance which may in great part have accounted for its triumphs.

So Chudlegh folk were satisfied with their village, and left the dwellers on the chalk to besmirch it as they pleased. True, life there might incline to stagnate; to glide dreamily along, regardless of artificial stimulants, of new-fangled ideas, of the great world which lay so near. But, on the other hand, it formed a quiet haven in which the storm-tossed soul could shelter from the hurrying blast—a green oasis, untouched by the blinding sand-storm.

Nor was it true that Chudlegh contained nothing worth seeing. There was the old church, dedicated centuries ago to St. Nicholas, that patron saint and martyr whose duty it is to protect the interests of young scholars—a duty about which, so far as Chudlegh was concerned, he had been somewhat remiss. It was a large and handsome building, this church, with a nave, two "aisles," and chancel; with, at the end of each aisle, a chapel inclosed by old oak lattices of curious workmanship, since then, alas! destroyed by irreverent hands. The chapel to the north belonged to the Hardyngs of Lingfield Chase—of whom more anon—in right of the manor of Vachary; that to the south to Squire Ffrench of Chudlegh Hall. Both chapels at that time retained traces of the ancient glass with which the church had once been "finely ornamented"—the Virgin seated, with a Glory about her head; divers por-

traits of the kings of Judah, crowned, and with scrolls in their hands, the which denoted in Saxon capitals their names. And in the east window were parts of a figure of the Saviour crucified, the left hand and feet nailed to the cross; a female standing below, and, forty years ago, quite perfect.

In the Vachary chapel was a tablet bearing the inscription—

"Reginald Hardyng gyft ycy dieu de s'alme eit merci."

And on a low altar-tomb of marble, on the north side of the chancel, were the effigies of a man and woman, with a child between them—all kneeling, and with a scroll issuing from the mouth of each. On that which came from the man was inscribed, "Have m'cy, Ihesu, in the honor of thy gloriovs resvrreccion:" on the woman's, "And grant vs the merite of thy bytter Passion:" on that of the child, "Parentes accipe, et infantem, bone X'þe."

Below these kneeling figures, and on the face of the tomb, were the words—

"Of your Charitie pray for the soulys of Christopher Hardyng, kn't, and lord of Vacherie, and Agas his Wyffe whos Bodie here lyeth beryed and departyd thys present lyfe the xviii day of Febrvar' in the yere of ovre Lord M.ccccc. and iii. for whos sowlys and all X'þen we pray you say Paternoster and Ave."

And apart from these remnants of stained glass, old lattices, and quaint effigies, with their quaint inscriptions, the church afforded other traces of a great antiquity. It was surmounted by a low, square tower, strengthened by heavy buttresses, and said to have been built in the thirteenth century —the holes, in which had been fixed the first scaffolding, still unclosed, and now the abode of innumerable jackdaws, whose ancestors had lived there in all security, undisturbed by the vibration of six bells, or the loud ticking of a big clock.

The village lay at the foot of a long range of hills, which extended due east and west, and along whose ridge, once upon a time, band after band of pilgrims had dragged their weary feet when journeying to St. Austin's shrine, avoiding, at so great an elevation, the risk of losing themselves in the vast oak-woods which lay to the south and far beneath. For so well did the oak flourish at Chudlegh that John Evelyn, author of the "Discourse on Forest Trees," speaking of some which had been planted there by his brother, says that he "lived to see them so finely thriven, though in a barren soil and cold clay, as to contain, one with another, three-quarters of a load of timber in a tree."

About half a mile east of the village, which was almost completely buried in these oak-woods, stood Chudlegh Hall, the property of Squire Ffrench—a modern-

Gothic edifice, built on the site of an older hall. It was surrounded by tall elms, which were haunted by a colony of rooks; and the front windows of its lower story opened upon a broad terrace, commanding a delightful prospect. To the west, and at a distance of about six miles, jutted into the plain the Coombe Hills; and beyond the extreme point of these, but in the far horizon, loomed the blue, straight outline of the Black Downs. Directly to the south, visible against the sky, could be seen on clear days the dark clump known as St. Edmund's Ring; whilst in the far south-east, the weald of ancient Suthsaxonia was lost in that of ancient Dorovernia. Between these distant points and the village, reposing beneath the terrace, the country seemed one vast forest, save where the common appeared as a clearing amid the trees, and a large expanse of water, formerly part of the

now dismembered park of "La Vacherie," glimmered in the sunlight.

To the north of that narrow plateau, on which stood the Hall, the ground rose so abruptly, as to be far too steep for carriage-road or cart-track, except where a rough and narrow ascent led from the village through the "Horse Block Hollow."

Ichabod Ffrench, the squire of Chudlegh, had formerly resided in that great mercantile centre, Camptown. But business had not been his forte; and, during many weary hours spent at the desk, he had yearned after the greater liberty to be found in a country life. By extraction, he was not a Loomshire man. On the contrary, he cherished a recollection of how his father had once crossed St. Patrick's Channel, to the end that he might advance his fortune. He could trace his pedigree for two centuries; and, even so long ago, his family stood possessed of arms hereditary. On which

account, he had no occasion to call at the Heralds' College, as did the celebrated Cato, then of Jamaica, but anciently of Tusculum, to search for the arms of Marcus Portius Cato, or those borne by his grandson, Marcus Cato Uticensis.

Ichabod Ffrench, then, became so greatly enamoured with the idea of a country life that, shortly after his father's death, which occurred in the year eighteen hundred and forty, he deserted Loomshire, and pitched his tent at Chudlegh, bringing with him a wife and two infant sons. As a rule, Ichabod was a far-seeing man; but, in his eagerness to escape from the thraldom of an office, he committed an indiscretion which, in later years, proved a source of deep regret—he left a considerable portion of his capital in the business in which he had ceased to be a partner.

No doubt it was a fortunate circumstance for Mary Radcliffe when Ichabod sought her

hand. His means were ample; his family was respectable; his pedigree was clear as noonday for the last two hundred years, and possibly might have been traced still further back, until lost in the obscure mythology of ancient kings. And the surname of Ffrench was quite as euphonious as that of Radcliffe. But, weighing in the scale with these advantages were certain drawbacks, and those of such a character as to cause Miss Radcliffe to hesitate. In the first place, what could have induced his sponsors to dub Mr. Ffrench with such an unchristian name as Ichabod! Then, he was plain Ichabod, and nothing more. Had he been Charles Ichabod, or Ichabod Charles, she could have seen her way more clearly. She could have dropped the Ichabod, and called him "Charlie." But Ichabod—"Ike"—"Ikey"—she could make nothing of such a name. In the second place, Mr. Ffrench's family were Nonconformists—Unitarians, in

fact—whilst the Radcliffes were strong Church-people.

So Miss Radcliffe hesitated, and for long, before finally consenting to Ichabod's suit. But her lover was tall and good-looking; manly, and addicted to out-of-door sports. Then his Christian name, if not altogether to her liking, was to prove itself prophetic. As at the birth of his prototype, its glory had departed from Israel, so now, the glory of this Nonconformist family was to be quenched in another Ichabod, who, drawn by the cords of love, promised to forsake the creed of his forefathers, if only Miss Radcliffe would smile upon his suit. So timely a concession on the one part paved the way for concession on the other; and, softened by this submission in the matter of faith, Mary Radcliffe at last consented to accept for a husband one who bore the uneuphonious name of Ichabod.

When their two and only children were

born, it was tacitly understood that neither was to perpetuate the distasteful name; and this mutual concession prevented the outbreak of conjugal hostilities. The elder was named Arthur, in memory of that ancient and thoroughly British king, from whom Mr. Ffrench might possibly be descended; the second, having come into the world on the morning of the eleventh of November, received the name of Martin, in honour of the sainted bishop of Tours, to whom that day is, in perpetuity, dedicated by the orthodox.

Having pitched his tent at Chudlegh, Mr. Ffrench was compelled to look round for employment wherewith to break the monotony of a life thenceforth to be spent in the country. And, naturally, he took to farming. He felt sure that farming could be made to pay far better than it did; and that the farmers, his neighbours, were sadly behind the times. Accordingly,

he grubbed his fences, enlarged his fields, and initiated a thorough system of drainage. Farmer Street and Farmer Killick shook their heads, and declared that no good would come of it. But some good did certainly come, and that despite these despondent prophecies—the workhouse was emptied of its able-bodied men, the shops drove a better trade, and wages advanced from a former nine shillings a week to a present twelve. At which Farmer Killick shook his head still more emphatically.

"If un goes on like that," he said, "Master Ffrench, be his pockets never so well lined, ull soon come to an end of un's tether."

"Ay, sure," Farmer Street agreed. "Where's the use of havin' a pocket full of siller if un doan't know when to use the button to't."

But Mr. Ffrench pursued his way without giving heed to the criticisms which

occasionally met his ear; and whilst taking care not to proffer his advice to unwilling listeners, continued to improve not only the condition of his farm, but of his fellow-men. He gave a day's fair wage for a day's fair work.

So it chanced one fine August afternoon, in the year of grace, eighteen hundred and forty-five, that Mr. Ffrench, having left the harvest-field, stood leaning over a gate, and contemplating a patch of swedes which lay on its farther side. So immersed was he in reflection that he did not notice a horse's footfall on the road, nor move until the sound of a self-sufficient and somewhat defiant voice caused him to turn round.

"Well, squire, and how go the swedes?"

"Ah, is that you, Todd? Look for yourself—they're beginning to cover the ground nicely."

Mr. Todd walked his horse to the gate.

"That top-dressing," continued the squire,

"has done a world of good. If Killick would but use it, he'd grow better roots than he does."

"Killick says that his roots are big enough for him, and that top-dressing would make them spongy."

"Bah!" exclaimed the other contemptuously.

"And how's the wheat cutting, squire? Will it go five quarters?"

"Nearer four, I'm afraid," said Mr. Ffrench somewhat ruefully. "It's never quite recovered from the effects of the cold, wet spring."

"The parson says you'll never grow wheat so long as you make those wide, flat lands of yours."

"Mathews be hanged! He's never seen fields drained like mine."

"Possibly. But a clay soil wants well ridging up, or it can't get rid of the surface water in winter."

"Nonsense, man! Call this clay! It's nothing but a fine, stiff loam."

Mr. Todd chuckled. He had shot his arrow and hit the mark. He knew, too, that the wound would rankle; but, not being a farmer himself, nor caring a brass farthing whether Mr. Ffrench grew five or three quarters to the acre, he hastened to change the subject.

"Have you seen to-day's paper, squire?"

"It had not reached the Hall when I left."

"There's been a fine stir in the share market. Railways are up ten, and a hundred new schemes are being floated, requiring a capital of several millions."

Mr. Ffrench gazed at his swedes reflectively, and then said, "I've got a few spare thousands, Todd. Could you put me up to a good thing?"

The other smiled cynically.

"Better keep your money where it is, squire, and let the promoters find other

dupes. There'll be plenty of them, I reckon, without adding to the number from Chudlegh."

"Yet people have made large fortunes in railways," urged Mr. Ffrench; "yourself among the number, Todd."

"No doubt, my friend; but, thank heaven! I've made my pile and got out. It's too late now, man, far too late. The mania can't last for ever; and when the end comes, there'll be a crash in comparison with which the South Sea Bubble will look a fool. Well, good-day, squire; better stick to your swedes; that's the best advice I can give." Saying which, Mr. Todd rode off towards the Manor.

For a short time longer, Mr. Ffrench stood looking over the gate, and then slowly turned his steps towards the Hall. The account given by Mr. Todd of this great inflation in railway stocks had made a deep impression upon his mind, nor could he

cast it lightly to one side. Not that he was a gambler; but, then, he was blessed with two sons, and had determined to be the founder of a county family. To become this was his great ambition; whilst, on the other hand, his means were not in direct proportion to his ambition. No doubt he was in comfortable circumstances; and, had Arthur alone been in question, nothing could have opposed itself to the fulfilment of his desire. But, over and above Arthur, remained Martin; and, although for the latter were destined those thirty thousand pounds which had been left in the business, and which might be held to constitute a very fair fortune for a younger son, still it would be far more pleasant could that thirty thousand be turned into fifty. And did not this continued rise in the share market afford a chance of attaining an end so desirable—one which, in all human probability, might not again occur during

a lifetime! Much would ever have more; and Mr. Ffrench, that afternoon, was far from realizing that contentment is in itself a great gain. On the other hand, Mr. Todd's advice had not fallen upon an altogether barren soil. The words, "It's too late now, man; far too late," rang in his ears; until, what with his wishes and what with his fears, he fell into a condition of hopeless uncertainty. But, as men are wont to "mark the hits but not the misses," so, Mr. Todd's individual success recurred to his vision with greater force than the prospective losses of many and unknown dupes. Tossed hither and thither by these perplexing considerations, Mr. Ffrench had come to no absolute decision when he reached the Hall.

"I've made my pile and got out," Mr. Todd had declared with evident self-laudation, and a considerable show of contempt for those who had not. But, then, Chris-

topher Todd was differently constituted to Ichabod Ffrench. Whilst the latter would be seeking after safety in the multitude of counsellors, the former, relying upon self alone, would have acted for good or for evil, as the case might be; and most times for good. He happened to be endowed with one of those calm, dispassionate tempers which constitutes the very mainspring of attainment, and which renders people callous to any but their own interest. To Mr. Todd, charity was but a pernicious sentiment; failure but the result of folly; and the accumulation of wordly gear and the satisfaction it afforded the *ne plus ultra* of existence. Naturally, then, he was both hard and cynical; although, when such a course did not interfere with his own views, he would occasionally go so far out of his way as to proffer advice to those whom he thought on the eve of committing a foolish act. In consequence, and because it at all times

worships success, the world called him shrewd, a good fellow in the main, and accepted him as an apostle.

Mr. Todd had retired from the Stock Exchange and settled at Chipping Manor about eighteen months before his interview with the squire. Possibly, had he taken to agriculture, he would have made a better farmer than the latter. For years past all his energy had been devoted to the accumulation of pounds, shillings, and pence; and quite as much to that of pence as of pounds. He would have been the last man in the world to sink large sums in theoretical improvements, without having first looked over his neighbour's fence and studied the foundation on which the system of farming there to be seen had been constructed. Nor would any weakness for the impoverished condition of the labouring class have influenced his method, or induced him, unless compelled thereto by other causes,

to increase by one iota its, at that time, miserable wage. According to his school of economics, capital had no other obligation towards labour than that of doling to it the lowest remuneration which it could be induced to accept—forgetful that a generous appreciation of services rendered fosters not only gratitude, but is in itself economical. But, as it happened, Mr. Todd felt no aptitude for agriculture, and from the hour in which he came to reside at the Manor had turned his attention to politics and the aggrandizement of his county position;—a little too much so, in fact, and in a manner so conspicuously pushing as to scandalize the neighbourhood.

Mrs. Todd had departed this life some three years before Mr. Todd purchased his estate, leaving an only son not exactly to deplore her loss, and scarcely to be in any less desolate condition than before her death. She had been entirely self-centred;

one whose time had been devoted to her toilet, her real and supposed ailments, and her lap-dogs. Her husband she had tolerated as supplying her many wants; her son she had regarded as a troublesome and useless encumbrance, as an unnecessary thorn in her tender side, and the legitimate scapegoat destined to bear the brunt of her ill-temper. Consequently, there had not been much love thrown away between the two; and, when she died, Percy regarded the occurrence almost with satisfaction, as bringing to a term the continual scoldings to which he had been accustomed.

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum" is, no doubt, a most moral aphorism, and applicable to the great majority. But, on the other hand, none can gather figs from the thorn-tree, nor grapes from the bramble-bush. Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. And the fruit which Mrs. Todd's tree had produced was of so acrid a cha-

racter, that its flavour remained upon the palate long after the tree itself had been cut down.

So it happened that when Christopher Todd and his son, forsaking their house in town, migrated to Chipping Manor, neither one nor the other greatly lamented the enforced absence of the late Mrs. Todd.

CHAPTER II.

LESSER BRETHREN.

It was late in the afternoon—six o'clock in fact—before Mr. Ffrench reached the Hall. The ascent from the swede field was steep and the road dusty, so that he felt extremely warm, with a strong inclination for something with which to assuage his thirst. Turning into the dining-room, he ordered a sherry and seltzer; and, that discussed, he stepped upon the terrace with a morning paper in his hand. He found Mrs. Ffrench sitting in a far corner, where tall elms cast a deep, cool shadow slantwise across the gravel.

"Well, Mary, it *is* hot to-day!" he

exclaimed, throwing himself into a basket-chair.

"Very, dear; almost the hottest day that we have had. But it is comparatively pleasant here, with a delicious breeze playing, now and again, amongst the trees."

Mr. Ffrench removed his straw hat, and suffered what air there was to fan his heated brow. Then he opened the paper, and prepared to dip into its columns.

"By the way, Ichabod,"—and the word came pat enough after so long practice—"by the way, Ichabod, I suppose you have quite made up your mind to send Martin to Rothbury?"

"Certainly, my dear. Why?"

"I had a letter from Miss King, this morning, enclosing her account; and, if he is not to return to Waterston after Christmas, it would be but polite to let her know."

"You had better write to that effect."

And then Mr. Ffrench resumed his paper. Presently he exclaimed—

"Haven't the boys come home? What mischief can they be up to, now?"

"No mischief, I trust, dear. Percy Todd came shortly after you went out; and they have gone to Vachary for a day's fishing."

"Hum! they ought to be back by this time," he said testily.

"I have no doubt that they will be here presently. Arthur is so very conscientious."

"I can't say as much for Martin and Percy, the young scamps. If there *is* any mud to be found, they are sure to be in the thick of it."

Then the squire once more turned to the City article.

"Grand Trunks up five," he murmured. "London and Birmingham, eight; Great Westerns, two hundred and twelve. Bless me! If I'd only subscribed for three

hundred Great Westerns, I could have sold out to-day, and made thirty-three thousand six hundred pounds—perhaps more." And, in his excitement, he let the paper fall to the ground.

"What is it, Ichabod?" inquired his wife anxiously. "No bad news, I hope, dear?"

"Not bad news, exactly; but it's provoking to think of what might have been."

Mrs. Ffrench was relieved. She had sufficient common sense to realize the vast difference which exists between "what is" and "what might be."

"It's too provoking," continued the squire. "Why on earth couldn't Todd have given me a hint twelve months ago? What's the use of saying to-day that it's too late?"

"Too late for what, Ichabod?"

"To invest in railways. The market is rising, and large fortunes are being made.

Such a chance will never occur again—never," exclaimed the squire dejectedly.

"Surely, dear, we have money enough. Why distress yourself about not having more?"

"On Martin's account, Mary. You know I've settled Chudlegh, together with my other property, on Arthur—all, that is, except the few thousands which remain in the business. Had I invested a year ago in Great Westerns, Martin would have been left to all intents and purposes in as good a position as the other."

"I told you at the time, Ichabod, that you were foolish to tie up the property as you did. But what's done cannot be undone."

"Shares are rising every day," murmured the squire wistfully.

"And Mr. Todd says it is too late to think of buying."

"Hang Todd! He has made a pile for

himself; why couldn't he help a neighbour to do the same?"

"I do not like Mr. Todd—I never did," remarked Mrs. Ffrench. "But people think him a clever man; and perhaps, Ichabod, you had better take his advice."

"Martin—poor Martin! It would be pleasant to feel that I had bettered his position. There would not be any great risk, after all," he added. "I could sell at once, if there were any signs of a fall."

"Better leave well alone, dear. As it is, Martin will not be so badly off."

"Not so badly off," echoed the squire, as if seeking by a repetition of the words to still a conscience ill at ease, and which more than half-doubted the wisdom of the settlement which had been made. "No, not so badly off. Well, Mary, we'll see—we'll see."

Mrs. Ffrench felt more satisfied. She knew that when her husband had once said

"we'll see," he was not likely to commit himself hurriedly; and that, although he might harp upon the matter from time to time, he would probably think no more about it, and devote his attention to his swedes and stock.

At that moment the boys, warm and out of breath, appeared at the farther end of the terrace.

"How hot you look!" exclaimed Mrs. Ffrench, as they threw themselves upon the gravel at her feet. "It's a quarter to seven, and dinner will be on the table in a few minutes."

"It isn't our fault really, mother," said Arthur. "Such a dreadful thing happened at Vachary, this afternoon!"

"Eh! what's that?" interrupted the squire. "What mischief have you been getting into, now?"

"You know Linn, mother," continued Arthur. "He was nearly drowned to-day."

"Linn Redman?"

"Yes, mother!" cried Martin. "We were in the boat, a long way out, when we heard some men shouting on the bank, and saw one of them run along the culvert, which drains the lake, and jump into the water. He appeared to be swimming towards us, when, throwing his arms straight above his head, he went under."

"Good gracious, dear! What did you do?"

"For a moment, we thought that he was trying to touch the bottom, and would soon come up again. But he didn't, and then we began to be frightened. At least, I know that I did."

"And so did I," said Arthur.

"I thought him an awful fool," exclaimed Percy.

"We got the oars out, and then found that the rowlocks had been left on the bank; so we were obliged to paddle towards

him as best we could. Presently, we saw his dark cap about four or five inches under water; and, getting up to it, we found him standing straight up with his heavy, hob-nailed boots fast rooted in the mud."

"Oh, Martin, how dreadful! What *did* you do?"

"We tried to get him into the boat, but couldn't manage it. So Arthur seized his hair and drew him along, whilst Percy and I paddled to the bank as fast as possible."

"And then," cried Percy, laughing, as if the affair were a good joke, "old Farmer Stemp wanted to hold him up by the heels, that the water might run out of his mouth!"

"But I didn't let them do that," interrupted Arthur, with an air of conscious pride. "I had been reading, only the other day, what we ought to do."

"And didn't he go into convulsions when he came round, and roll his eyes, and clutch at the grass with his hands," Percy shouted.

"Shut up, Percy," said Martin. "How would *you* like to be half-drowned?"

"You won't catch me trying it. I wouldn't be such a fool."

"And what did you do next?" inquired Mrs. Ffrench.

"Wrapped him in dry smocks, and took him home in a cart."

"I'm glad it was no worse," remarked the squire. "Now, boys, get ready for dinner. Better tell them, Mary, to put it off for ten minutes."

"Yes, dear; and, Percy, it's so late that you had better dine with us."

Percy, nothing loath, ran with the others to pass a brush over his tangled hair, and to make a pretence of washing his grimy hands.

Mrs. Ffrench was naturally proud at the presence of mind which her sons had displayed. They were so young, too;—Arthur being fourteen, and Martin twelve.

Even the squire thought them two fine young fellows, and, moreover, he should have a good yarn to retail to his brother justices next bench-day. But what could have induced that young fool, Linn, to jump into deep water—with all his clothes on—when he could not swim a stroke?

"What were those fellows doing at Vachary?" he inquired of Arthur, when in the dining-room.

"Stemp had been lading out some holes in the brook, close to that end of the lake, and the men had been standing in the water all day."

"He had given them lots of beer," continued Martin. "It's hot work, lading out holes a day like this."

"And nearly lost a life for the sake of a few eels," growled the squire.

"It wasn't his fault, father. He did what he could to prevent Linn from going into the water; but he rushed away from the

other men when they tried to hold him back."

"Poor lad!" said Mrs. Ffrench. "We must inquire about him, to-morrow."

"Which will be more than he deserves, Mary. Have some chicken, Percy?"

"Please," replied the boy, his eyes glittering at the prospect of a tender wing and an ample supply of bread-sauce. For Percy inherited a goodly share of his mother's selfishness, and was considered by all, save his father, as a decided glutton.

Having sent him a wing, the squire proceeded to dismember what remained of the bird, before helping the other boys. In doing so, he happened to raise the breast upon his carving-fork; and Percy, who had been anxiously devouring his every movement, was afraid that the delicacy would fall to Arthur's share.

"I like breast, Mr. Ffrench!" he exclaimed, with his mouth full.

"You greedy young pig!" cried Martin. "You can't eat a breast and a wing at the same time!"

"I wonder that he has so good an appetite," said Arthur quietly, "after what happened this morning."

"So do I," replied Martin, his eyes twinkling with amusement.

"You're a soft, Martin," retorted Percy. "*I* wouldn't be tied to a girl's petticoats like you."

Martin looked as if about to make an angry reply, when he was interrupted by the squire.

"Come, boys!—no more of this. But what's the joke, eh, Martin?" he continued after a moment, curiosity getting the better of his judgment, and thinking that perhaps he might have yet another yarn for his friends next Saturday.

Martin laughed. "Well, you see, father, we told Reuben, this morning, to get a

bottle of beer ready for us to take to Vachary; and, being in a great hurry, and none of the men being in the pantry when I went for it, I took a bottle from the dresser, which looked as if full of beer. We were very hot when we got there, and Percy was thirsty; so he took a long pull at the bottle."

"So would you have done," exclaimed Percy, "if you have been as thirsty as I was."

"As it happened, I didn't and you did. And it served you right, for you're always wanting the first and best of everything."

"Never mind that now," said his father; "get on with the story."

"When he had finished with the bottle, Percy made a wry face. 'I don't believe it's beer at all,' he exclaimed angrily. 'It's some other beastly stuff.' Saying which, he threw the bottle into the water; and, there being no cork in it, it went down."

"He might have let you taste it," suggested Mrs. Ffrench.

"Perhaps he didn't want us to see how little he had left, mother. He took an awfully long pull."

"It's lucky for you, Martin, that I did throw it away, so you need not sneer like that. It made me feel awfully bad!"

"Wasn't it beer?" asked the squire.

"Not it, father. When we got home, Reuben wanted to know why we hadn't taken our beer, and what we had done with his bottle of salts and senna."

The squire laughed. Indeed, they all laughed, much to Percy's disgust.

"You'll be careful another time; look before you leap, eh, Percy." And Mr. Ffrench again chuckled over the incident.

Percy had not regained his equanimity when dessert was put upon the table; and shortly afterwards took his departure. He had not been endowed with the sweetest

of dispositions. He was by nature mean rather than generous; selfish rather than open-handed. And the dispositions which were self-sown in his breast had been left uncared for and unchecked by both father and mother. As he grew out of childhood into boyhood, home influences had tended to increase rather than to diminish his original tendencies; and, unless the discipline of school should prove potent to save him from himself, there was every probability that in his case the boy would prove father to the man—that he would be as the

"serpent's egg
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous."

All this Mrs. Ffrench perceived; nor, if the matter had been left entirely to her discretion, would she have chosen him as a companion for her boys. But he was the son of a near neighbour; an only son, too, and motherless; so that she did not

see a way out of the difficulty without occasioning a perpetual source of irritation between the family at the Hall and Mr. Todd. This she did not care to risk, nor would have thought herself justified in risking without something more definite on which to act. She trusted rather to Arthur's greater age and sterling character; to Martin's generous, high-spirited temper; nor could she bring herself to believe that, in the case of either son, Percy's evil communications would corrupt good manners. And, in so believing, she was undoubtedly correct. Boys, like Arthur and Martin, are rarely contaminated by contact with what is mean and selfish. They are rather inclined to avoid it; or perhaps, after their crude way, to bully it into something better.

Next morning, as Mr. Ffrench was on his way to the harvest-field, he noticed a figure, loitering about the gates of the stable-yard.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Is that you, Linn?"

"Ay, squire, it be," said the lad awkwardly, touching his well-worn hat with his forefinger.

"What were you about yesterday, my boy — getting half-drowned as they tell me you did?"

"Seems I'd taken a drop too much, sir."

"And after that, a drop more than you'd bargained for, eh? Well, you'd better be more careful, or next time you may not get off so easily. And what do you want now, my man?"

"Please, sir, I came to thank the young gentlemen as pulled me out o' the water."

"They'll be here in a minute. But, harkee, sirrah; don't put the young gentlemen up to any of your pranks, or, may be, you'll suffer for it."

Linn promised to be careful; and, indeed, that morning was very penitent. He knew

that his had been a narrow escape, and he was still weak from the effects of his long immersion. But, in spite of any such temporary contrition, the warning was not altogether unnecessary. He was one of the most daring lads in the village. He would swarm the highest tree and crawl along the slenderest bough to rob a rook's or pigeon's nest. He could mark to a nicety the spot where the scared partridges alighted after a long flight; he knew the seat of every hare upon the property; and the alehouse gossips alleged that he could set a snare with the best poacher in the neighbourhood. There was but one thing which he detested, and that was, of course, regular work, whether at school or on the farm. So he had grown up one of nature's young savages, tolerated by the squire, and the companion of his boys during the holidays. Being the keeper's son, he carried the game-bag in September, and marshalled

the beaters when the copses were shot through, later in the season.

The squire's warning, then, was far from being unnecessary; more particularly as the events of the previous day promised to attach him to his young masters yet more closely than before.

CHAPTER III.

PRIVATE TUITION.

For the last twelve months Percy and Martin had been together at Westerton; but after Christmas they were to go to a private tutor at Rothbury. And soon Christmas came, and Christmas went; whilst the holidays slipped insensibly away —all too insensibly for the boys. At last came the eve of their departure, when guns must be returned to their rack over the fireplace, steel traps be handed to Linn with many injunctions as to their safety, and a long adieu be paid to Timon and Juno in their kennel at the keeper's lodge.

Timon was a setter, and sagacious. No

doubt he regretted the many pleasant days so lately spent with his young masters, but he received their farewells with dignity, as though conscious that he had arrived at man's estate, whilst their breaking-in was but half accomplished. Juno, on the other hand—a pointer, belonging to the opposite and softer sex—was far more disturbed; trembling, as she said good-bye, from the tip of her nose to the point of her tail; soiling their jackets with her paws; and weeping tears which ran in gritty rivulets down her cheek.

The squire hated partings of any description, be they with whom they might; and on that eventful morning pretended an important engagement. But Mrs. Ffrench was on the steps when the whitechapel, in which the boys were to drive to the station, came to the door. Martin, like his father, detested leave-taking; and, to-day, more than ever. For Percy was at hand, a

fellow who would be sure to chaff him before his schoolmates were he to let fall a single tear. So, Mrs. Ffrench had but time to whisper, "You are going to a new school, dear, and will be amongst older boys than at Westerton; but remember the words on John Evelyn's tomb, 'That all is vanity which is not honest; and that there is no solid wisdom but real piety.'" Then Martin tore himself away and sprang into the whitechapel.

The nearest station, from which they could journey to Rothbury, was seventeen miles distant. That morning, too, a sharp frost caused the long drive to be intensely cold. The trees were covered with sparkling rime; the boys' breath became congealed, and soon made their comforters and coats as white as were the trees; their feet, dangling a few inches from the bottom of the trap, and despite the thick rugs in which they had wrapped their legs, lost

all feeling, or rather seemed no longer their own, but to be attached after a most uncomfortable fashion and precisely where least wanted. Yet, such discomforts notwithstanding, the lads enjoyed the rapid pace at which they moved through the keen air; and talked with old Gammon, the coachman, as though returning from and not going to school. For a time they forgot about Black Monday and early rising; about punishments and books; and, young Britons that they were, refused to brood over future troubles until these stood instant.

It was only when in the slow train by which they journeyed to Rothbury that their spirits began to flag. Then, even the glass of beer and good toasting, which they had enjoyed before a blazing fire at the station inn, lost their effect. At that time there were no foot-warmers in the carriages as there are to-day, but hoar frost

incrusted the windows and obscured the view. They scraped the rime from the glass, but the country looked flat and uninviting—far different to the hills and vale at Chudlegh; so different, that they felt as strangers, cast upon their own resources, and consequently sad. It was in vain for Percy to rally Martin about his looks. Martin found an answer ready to his tongue in Percy's own dejection; and soon, as by a silent compact, each ceased to torment the other.

Although Martin felt cold and miserable, there lay at the bottom of his heart a something which nerved him to meet the unknown and endure the inevitable; which prevented him from completely breaking down, and determined him to show a bold front. He had too much inborn pluck to be a coward.

Percy solaced himself after another fashion. He was an intensely selfish lad,

and to him his own comfort was of the first importance. He would watch his new companions closely, and select the strongest on whom to lean. That done, he should, no doubt, be able to find many ways whereby to make himself agreeable; and, if he could thus contrive, his life would in all probability be an easy one. From which it may be gathered, that, if he possessed the wisdom of the serpent, it was not altogether so clear that he was indued with the harmlessness of the dove.

On arriving at Rothbury, they found the village to be some two miles distant from the station—the collective wisdom of that generation having determined that railways must prove detrimental to property, and that, when they could not be avoided, they must be carried so far as possible from the centres of population.

No conveyance plying between the station and village—Rothbury being a small place

and its traffic infinitesimal—Martin and Percy hired a fly to take themselves and their luggage to the rectory. And, whilst it was being prepared, they entered the "hotel," and made a good dinner from the remains of a cold joint of beef, a jar of pickles, a highly-flavoured cheese, and a pot of sweet, dark-coloured ale. But to the boys, no viands could have been more enticing. Three hours spent in a slow, cross-country train had left them cold and famished. Then it was delightful to feel that the cost of the entertainment must be defrayed out of their own pockets; and that they would have the privilege of tipping the country girl, who waited upon them, with a couple of threepenny bits drawn from the same deep and never-to-be-bottomed source. Yes, it was very delightful; a forward step on the road to independence, and one so great as to make them seem, when at last they issued from the hotel, to

have advanced a long stage towards perfect liberty.

At the rectory, the Rev. Peter Walford received them kindly, and led them into the drawing-room, where they were introduced to his wife and only daughter, Matilda—commonly known as Patty; and where they were regaled with slices of cake and a glass of very pale, very thin sherry. By which processes, having demonstrated the wide difference which does, and no doubt ought to exist between the liberality of a private tutor and that of an ordinary school, their preceptor marched them through the garden into a field, devoted to the sole use of his pupils. The "old boys" had returned the previous day, and were now intent upon a game of rounders—so intent as to be for some moments unaware of the appearance of Mr. Walford and his young friends. But so great a presence could not escape observation for long together, and soon the lads

came flocking round, eager to welcome the new-comers and wondering as to what order of the genus *puer* they might belong.

It was Friday; and, Saturday being invariably and by immemorial custom a half-holiday, Mr. Walford, in honour of the new arrivals, was good enough to make it a whole one. Nothing could be gained, he said, by commencing lessons that week. It would be much better to begin work on Monday; and, meantime, they would have the more leisure in which to become acquainted with their new companions.

But Black Monday came at length, and with it the commencement of Martin's troubles. As for Percy, he was so evidently a dunce as to be unfit to join the one and only class which had the honour of being taught by Mr. Walford. He was relegated to Patty, to imbibe under her care the rudiments of grammar, and to acquire what little knowledge could be conveyed by a

study of the Latin Delectus. And this he did in company with Patty's youngest brother, Willy, a boy of about half his age and size. With Martin it was different. He had read Cæsar's Commentaries and struggled through the first two books of the "Anabasis." He was not stupid, though somewhat backward; and by dint of a little extra coaching might become a credit to the establishment. So Mr. Walford placed him at the bottom of his own class, and presented him with a copy of the "Ajax" of Sophocles—the play to be read during the present term.

Now, between the "Anabasis" of Xenophon and the "Ajax" of Sophocles stretches, as all men know, a wide gulf. The former is a plain narrative, lucid in style, and free from mannerisms: the latter, one of the most difficult tragedies that can be put into a schoolboy's hand. And so poor Martin found it. He laboured at it; he wept over

it; he essayed to interpret its hard sayings, and to grasp the, to him, mystic rhythm of its strophes and antistrophes. Worse still, he was ordered to commit many of its more noted passages to memory. Little did his tutor think how its opening words haunted him, even when asleep, and recurred to his thoughts when waking. He found himself repeating them on the football field, and unconsciously muttering them during the long rambles which he took on a Saturday afternoon. So difficult were they to grasp that, when once attained, they became indelible—

> "'Αει μὲν, ὦ παῖ Λαρτίου, δέδορκά σε
> πεῖράν τιν' ἐχθρῶν ἁρπάσαι θηρώμενον."

Even in later years, long after he had seen Rothbury for the last time, and when, perhaps, he was engaged about some totally irrelevant matter, the words would be remembered, surging like a not-to-be resisted, troublous sea—

"Ἀει μὲν, ὦ παῖ Λαρτίου, δέδορκά σε—"

But in a few weeks, and after intense application, his work become easier; and then Mr. Walford began to praise his industry. Indeed, had his griefs been confined to the schoolroom, Martin could have been almost happy. That, however, he was not to be. The troubles showered upon him by the other pupils far exceeded in their intensity those occasioned by his work. There were but eight boys beside himself, and he was the youngest, Willy alone excepted. Next came Percy, but Percy was a sycophant, and from the day of his arrival had made up to the strongest and biggest of the eight, under the protection of whose wing he had found security from the blows and taunts with which his friend was assailed.

The study, in which the boys worked, was a large room at the back of the house, connected with the latter by a long passage,

and prevented from becoming an annoyance to the family by double doors. There Mr. Walford taught from eleven to one, and from four to six; the remainder of the day being devoted to play, or to the preparation of next morning's work. Being both clergyman and tutor, he could not well give more time to his pupils than he did; and the boys were left for long hours practically their own masters.

The "cock of the school," so far as strength was concerned, happened to be a lad named Morgan, who had once been at a public school, but whose parents had retired him therefrom with a hope that at Rothbury he would be kept out of mischief, and, perhaps, learn more rapidly than he had so far done. He was tall for his years, and, like many whose supply of muscle is out of proportion to the quality of their brain, did not take kindly to books. On the contrary, he gloried in his strength,

and was never tired of descanting on the many pleasures and wide experiences to be enjoyed in a larger sphere; and, since none of his present companions had partaken of similar advantages, he was able to do so without contradiction.

Jones and Gurney came next in point of size; and their combined influence, had they chosen to exert it, could no doubt, have shaken Master Morgan's throne to its very foundations, and attracted the eyes of his young courtiers towards themselves. But they were too lazy or too indifferent to disturb themselves needlessly, or unless some unusual abuse of power should excite their disgust. Meantime, they studied the "Ajax," and gave promise of becoming two of the best scholars ever turned out by the school.

Then came three others—Godfrey, Glyn, Hubbard—who, but a short time back, had emerged from the position now held by

Martin, and who, for the sake of present immunity, formed the basis of Master Morgan's court. And to them Percy had attached himself.

One evening, about six weeks after the commencement of the term, all were in the schoolroom—presumably intent upon the preparation of next morning's work. But Morgan, having a rooted antipathy to study of any kind, and Percy, having nothing more than a few sentences of Latin Delectus to learn by rote, the two were busy over a game of draughts. In due course, Percy lost not only the game, but his temper; and, looking round for something on which to vent his spleen, espied Martin, who was poring over that, to a tyro, most difficult to be apprehended of all grammatic treatises, Kennedy's Latin Grammar, done in the English tongue.

"I say, Martin, what a fool you are to work like that!" he exclaimed. "Why

don't you get a novel like Glyn, or play a game of draughts with some one? Walford wouldn't be any wiser to-morrow morning."

"I'm not interfering with you, am I?" retorted Martin, looking up from his book.

"I wouldn't be such a grind as you, to save my life. I say Glyn, give him a rap on the head, and see whether that won't wake him up a bit."

Glyn got an atlas from the shelf, whilst Godfrey and Hubbard seized the hands which Martin had raised to ward off the blows. The atlas—bought by Mr. Ffrench for far different uses—having been recently bound, had stiff corners; and Glyn, grasping it firmly, brought it two or three times sharply down on the crown of the victim's head.

"Give him two or three more!" shouted Morgan, who enjoyed Martin's struggles.

"It's only what he used to do himself

to the small fellows at Westerton," sneered Percy, "and to think that he should have got the good-conduct prize there, last term!"

"The little sneak," cried Morgan. "Give him another, Glyn, to take the conceit out of him. How many fellows did he bully, Percy?"

"There was Hobbs, and Fisher, and Elwes, and a lot more."

"Give him a rap for each," cried Morgan, highly delighted, as at his bidding the blows fell in quick succession.

Martin became mad with rage and pain, and struggled violently to escape. It was not the first time by many that the atlas had been thus employed, and the repeated application of its sharp corners was fast changing the thin layer of fleshy tissue which covered the crown of his head into a watery pulp. Presently the struggle became of so general and determined a

character that Jones thought it high time to interfere.

"What brutes you fellows are!" he exclaimed. "Why can't you let him alone?"

"He's got nothing more than he deserves," retorted Morgan defiantly.

"I know he's a young prig and all that; but leave him alone now. He's had enough for one night. Leave him alone, I say, Glyn!" And as Jones appeared determined to carry his point, Martin's tormentors at length desisted.

Soon afterwards the bell summoned them to prayers; and, prayers being over, all trooped upstairs to their several bedrooms. Pleasant enough bedrooms they were, with white dimity curtains at the head of each bed; with clean counterpanes and well-scrubbed floor; with a strip of carpet, a chair, and chest of drawers appropriated to each boy; and with airy windows looking over the garden and play-field towards the

church. Bedrooms which Mrs. Walford took great pride in showing to such parents as came to spy out the land, and better than which no parents could have desired. In them, at all events, ought to reign peace, quiet after daily work, and a cessation of the petty strife which at times rendered the study anything but a rose-garden.

That night, Martin said his short prayers as usual—endeavouring, after John Evelyn's precept, to find in real piety a solid wisdom; then, hurriedly throwing off his clothes, he tumbled into bed. Even there his tormentors had been beforehand, and made for his greater comfort what is commonly known as an apple-pie bed. The work had been clumsily performed, so that Martin, by bringing his knees up to his chin was able to get his body between the sheets, where he found himself in company with his hair-brushes, his comb, and a quantity of salt. At the same moment Morgan and

Percy blew out the candles with an evident intention of making his condition the more uncomfortable.

Martin's temper had been roused by the persecution to which he had been subjected, and he disdained to make a complaint. Instead of that, he kicked and kicked until he kicked his feet through the sheet, and was able to stretch himself at full length in the bed. Next, he put the brushes and comb, as quietly as possible, upon the chair which stood at the bedside, and tried to sleep.

His tormentors were disappointed. They had expected to get more fun out of their trouble than they were apparently about to do.

"Is your bed comfortable?" inquired Morgan, at last.

"Quite comfortable, thanks," returned Martin.

"I'll tell you what it is, Percy!" ex-

claimed Morgan. "That girl, Sally, must have re-made the bed after we went downstairs. She saw us coming out of the room, I know."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Percy. "She's awfully sweet on Martin—she always was from the first. But I say, Morgan; I don't think he's said his prayers, and I know his mother wouldn't like him to cut them."

"He hasn't, eh! Get up at once, you little beggar, and stop on your knees for five minutes."

"I did say them," growled Martin.

"You didn't, I tell you. Up with you, or you'll get a good licking."

But Martin refused to stir; and Morgan, probably finding his bed too comfortably warm to leave, at length suffered the lad to remain in peace.

Next day was Sunday; and, when Martin awoke, the sun was streaming through the

window, and the chirping birds foretold a fine day. He awoke from a deep sleep, and that so suddenly as at first to imagine that he was in his bedroom at Chudlegh. The birds used to chirp in the same way there; and the same sun used to stream through his open window in the same joyous fashion. But at Chudlegh there was only one other bed in the room—that in which Arthur slept—and here, alas, were three or four. Then, his head felt queer and heavy, and his eyelids bigger than their wont; and that in a sort of way which he did not remember them to have done before. He felt drowsy, too, and inclined to remain where he was—possessed by a vague consciousness that trouble and unhappiness would be his lot were he to become more thoroughly awake.

At last the bell, which each morning roused the boys from their beds, echoed through the room; and he remembered

but too well, that he was at Rothbury; recollected that Morgan and Percy and Glyn slept in the same dormitory, and possibly were even now prepared to renew the tortures which he had endured for the last six weeks. He sprung out of bed with a sigh, and hurried to his washstand.

All at once Glyn exclaimed—

"Hallo, French! What on earth have you done to yourself? Look at his face, Morgan!"

Thus appealed to, Morgan turned round, and saw that Martin's left eye was swollen and black.

"The fool must have been fighting with himself," he sneered.

"But how did it happen?" continued Glyn. "I'll swear that I never touched you."

"Nor I! nor I!" exclaimed Morgan and Percy in the same breath.

"You do look a guy," cried Glyn, after

a few seconds devoted to the study of poor Martin's face. "Walford can't help seeing it, and then there'll be a pretty row!"

"He'll peach, and say we did it," suggested Percy.

"He'd better not," growled Morgan. "We'll make it warm for him if he does."

Martin had no idea of peaching. In fact, he was quite unable to account for the accident. But when, a little later, he entered the breakfast-room, he did so with a quaking heart; nor did many moments elapse before Mr. Walford noticed his appearance.

"Whatever has happened to your face?" he exclaimed. "Have you been fighting?"

"No, sir."

"Nonsense, Ffrench! How else could it be in such a condition?"

"Please, sir, I don't know."

"Don't know how you got a black eye!

Absurd. Can any of you boys tell me about it?" he inquired, turning sharply towards them.

"No, sir," they exclaimed.

"Please, sir, I saw it first," added Glyn; "when he got up this morning."

"And hadn't he a black eye when he went to bed?"

"No, sir."

"It seems a most extraordinary affair. I cannot understand it," exclaimed the tutor, when, after further questions, he had been unable to shake the lad's story. "But it is quite impossible for you to go to church, Ffrench; and after breakfast you had better find a comfortable chair in the drawing-room."

When, after service, Mr. Walford returned to the rectory, he found that Martin's right eye was also black and swollen.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. And then the same idea occurred to him as to

Morgan. "You must have been fighting with yourself, Ffrench!"

Martin strenuously denied having done anything so foolish.

"It's the most extraordinary circumstance — most extraordinary," murmured the tutor, fairly puzzled. Then came the doctor, who carefully examined the patient's head.

"What can have happened to you, my lad?" he inquired kindly; "your scalp is inflated like a bladder."

But Martin was staunch, and refused to tell how much he had suffered. The black eyes were pronounced to have sprung from sympathetic inflammation originating in a morbid condition of the scalp; and, for the next two or three days, Martin was allowed to remain quietly in the drawing-room, where, after her pupils had been dismissed, Patty would read to him, or in her turn listen whilst he chatted about

Chudlegh, and the many things which he intended to do during the summer holidays.

Some people are apt to think that boys must lead a quieter life in a small school than in a large one; that the old and respected adage about safety consisting in numbers does not hold good when applied to the young; and that a few nice boys, whom a private tutor has consented to receive into the bosom of his family, must of necessity constitute a more gentlemanly society than that to be found amid the rough-and-tumble ways of a larger institution. And yet such an idea is too often fallacious. Boys are boys, nor is their natural disposition that of angels. Bullies, sneaks, and parasites are ever to be found amongst them; and when their number is small, the more masterful sometimes make a dead set at one poor unfortunate. A small school, in fact, admits but of an oligarchy, or possibly of a "Directory of

Five," or, in many cases, of but a single tyrant. Its despots follow each other in quick succession, whilst their decrees are both arbitrary and uncertain. It can never enjoy the constitutional freedom begotten of larger numbers, and established by the public voice. A small school, even should the cruelty which was rampant at Rothbury be absent, is liable to generate in its younger members a despicable toadyism, and upon those who refuse to bow it can stamp its heel with crushing force. Its tendency is to weaken rather than to strengthen character.

But Martin, fortunately for himself, was not one who could be induced to bow. He had been cast in too stiff a mould to permit his fears to conquer his spirit. On the contrary, he was determined not to toady Morgan, or Jones, or Gurney, as Percy had done, but to fight his battles like the brave young Briton that he was. And as he lay

upon a sofa in the drawing-room, apart from his tormentors, and with time to put two and two together, he determined upon a future course. He would stand up to the next fellow who attempted to molest him, and would try to give him tit for tat, even did it happen to be that hulky coward, Morgan. He could but get a licking; and that would be far preferable to a despicable safety, such as Percy had secured.

His determination had not been long formed ere it was put to a crucial test, although not by Morgan. For that worthy contrived, in the majority of instances, to place another in the breach, and to protect his precious self. On this occasion, too, Morgan had little to do with the matter, and Percy was the sole instigator of his own punishment.

Martin was allowed to leave the drawing-room for the first time on Thursday afternoon; and, taking his cap from its peg in

the passage, he started to join his companions in the play-field. As he appeared at the gate they were about to commence a game of football, and were tossing for sides.

"Hallo!" cried Percy, who was the first to see him. "Here's softy. Don't let's have him on our side, Morgan."

"What a brute you are, Percy," exclaimed Gurney. "The fellow has been ill. Why can't you leave him alone?"

"Well, he *is* a softy, isn't he?" retorted the other. "He's been spending all the morning with Patty; and, when at home, he's always tied to a girl's apron."

Martin grew pale with rage; and, stepping up to Percy, hit that young man full in the face, and with such force as to send him staggering backward.

"Pitch into him, Morgan," cried Percy. "Give it him well, for striking a fellow like that."

But Jones and Gurney interfered, and

declared that Percy had got nothing more than he deserved.

"A fight! A fight!" cried Glyn and two or three others, excitedly.

Martin threw off his jacket, and tossed his cap upon the ground.

"I'm ready," he shouted. "Let him come on if he dare!"

Percy did not appear very daring; but he was taller, and older, and altogether bigger than his opponent; and for very shame obliged to avenge the blow.

The contest was severe. On one side were ranged Martin's pluck and smaller size; on the other, Percy's greater strength and craven spirit. But the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Martin was supported by a righteous indignation at the other's meanness; Percy was conscious of a bad cause; and the upshot of the matter was, that the latter was soundly punished.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HARDYNGS OF "LA VACHERIE."

Twice had Percy scoffed at Martin for being tied to a girl's apron; and in sooth the taunt had not been without foundation. The boy had become deeply enamoured of the pretty face of fair Agnes Hardyng, second and younger daughter of the owner of Lingfield Chase. That he should have become thus enamoured was no doubt a folly. He was barely thirteen, and the girl three months younger; whilst from their respective ages it was clear that she would be of a marriageable age when he was still a boy and in his teens. But when did love pause to reflect, or regard ulterior consequences? What mattered it that they had

barely left the nursery; that years must elapse before Martin could secure for his bride a comfortable, or indeed, any sort of home? They simply loved, and took no heed of obstacles which might in the future beset their path. Nor let the cynic mete to their folly a measure too severe. In loving they but proved their capacity for love. Too young to love, quotha! Prithee, who can say when love begins, where lies its source, or across what mead its stream will flow? Observe the baby-maid who has learned to crow but cannot as yet articulate. See how she nestles a blushing cheek upon her mother's shoulder; how, all suddenly, she lifts her small head and, smiling prettily, strives to attach her worshipper by stronger cords. Watch her in the nursery, promoting the courtship of her dolls; or persuading her boy-brother to perform their marriage-rites with due solemnity. Too young to love, most wise

philosopher! Prithee, what time may that be?

Not that Agnes was so deeply smitten with Martin as the lad with her. She was a nascent beauty, and, conscious of her beauty, delighted to view Martin at her feet. It was so pleasant to order him now hither, now thither; to make him do this, or that; and sometimes, when he was in the garden playing with other boys, so pleasant to commission Blanche to bring him to her side, she asserting the while that she could not exist without his presence. And Martin, who could not be induced to bow at Morgan's bidding, obeyed her slightest nod, and basked in the light of her unstable smile; whilst she—

> "So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
> From beneath her gather'd wimple
> Glancing with black-beaded eyes,
> Till the lightning laughters dimple
> The baby-roses in her cheeks;
> Then away she flies."

Mrs. Hardyng noticed all this; but left the children to themselves, to accident, and to the future. The blossom of their dawning love might ripen into fruit, or it might fall—cut off by a latter frost. If it ripened, well. If it happened to be cut off, well too. In the one case, her daughter's happiness would be assured; in the other, that happiness could not by any chance become too greatly compromised.

Surrounding circumstances give a tone to current thought. Influenced by them, necessity is found a master; virtue appears to consist but in submission; duty in impersonality. Influenced by circumstances we oft are—

> "such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep."

Some such controlling influence was potent with Mrs. Hardyng. Those ways and means, which can level mountains and

bridge deep valleys, were not over-ready to respond to her beck. In other words, the fortunes of the family at Lingfield Chase existed but as a remnant of their former selves. The family was poor, as some count poverty, and Blanche Hardyng was proud. To her it appeared almost as a godsend that two such well-to-do men as Ichabod Ffrench and Christopher Todd should have settled in the neighbourhood; and a still greater godsend that they should be blessed with sons, whilst she had two daughters who, in the years to come, would require to be well settled in life. So it came to pass that Mrs. Hardyng regarded the love of Martin for her younger daughter with complacency, and would have been the last person to place a drag beneath the hitherto so smoothly-rolling wheel.

Mrs. Hardyng had been a Grattan of Middleshire, but was descended from a

junior branch of the family. She was the connection of an earl, if not an earl's daughter—an accident which impelled her to regard the world through an inverted telescope. Distant objects, which would have been magnified if seen from the right end of her telescope, appeared, when contrasted with the near though really more insignificant forms which clustered about her, microscopically small and disproportionately unimportant. Her family, her rank, her footing in the county, were as mountains; the million, the struggling world, its interests and aspirations, were casualties belonging to a sphere remote from her own; separated from it, too, by a void which it was impossible to bridge. There was no middle distance in her landscape. No sort of kindred could exist between herself and those thousand worlds of toil and pleasure which pulsated at her very side, in distant lands, or beneath her

feet. She was separated from any such by old associations, by prejudice, by inherent choice. She was, in fact, one whom people are wont to call "a woman of the world"—a strange misnomer, unless the expression be restricted to its narrowest sense. For her world was small and of little breadth. It contained standing room for hundreds, but not for millions; for those hundreds who had been born with the traditional silver spoon, and who knew how to put a material spoon into their mouths after a well-understood fashion. But she being a "woman of the world," it would be useless to attempt a moral. Her world regarded her foibles leniently, and counted her as of itself. Had her conduct been put to the vote it would have turned its thumb down, not upwards.

But, notwithstanding that she was thus infiltrated by the atmosphere in which she lived, and was permeated by a sense of

the dignity attaching to her family, Mrs. Hardyng was at most times a pleasant-mannered little woman. She had brought up her girls conscientiously — conscientiously, that is, according to her lights. Her younger daughter, Agnes, promised to grow into the very image of herself, both as to appearance and in character. Blanche took more after her father; was dark instead of fair; staid instead of volatile; considerate to others rather than occupied with herself; possibly not so taking on a slight acquaintance, but whose charms would seem insensibly to expand as she became better known. She was her father's first-born and favourite child.

Time had no doubt softened the blow, but it had been a great mortification to Reginald Hardyng that fortune had not blessed his nuptials with a son and heir. Sprung from an ancient lineage, from a family resident in the county for many

centuries, it became doubly hard that he should be the last to bear the name in direct descent. He had been an only son; and, at his death, the estates would devolve upon his daughters as co-heiresses. To one who contemplated the family tree and its many ramifications with so great a pride this was a source of deep regret.

So early as the thirteenth century the lordship of Lingfield cum Vacherie et Chudlegh had devolved, through his wife, Joan, on Theobald Botiller. At La Vacherie, too, the lady Joan had died. During the next century, in its oratory or chapel, the lady Eleanor, countess of Carrick, widow, had married Sir Thomas Dagworth Knt.; and there, twenty years later, her daughter Eleanor was also married to the celebrated Walter, Lord Fitzwalter. *Tempus* Henry VII. the estate fell into the hands of that Reginald Hardyng, whose memorial tablet still graced the walls of the parish

church, by his marriage with the lady Blanche, direct descendant of the said Lord Fitzwalter and Eleanor his wife, together with its courts leet, knights' fees, parks, warrens, liberties, and privileges—reserving to the king the liberty of hunting and taking beasts of chase in the Park of Vachary at his pleasure.

Holinshed calls this same Sir Reginald "a verie father of his Countrie; and for his high wisedome and singular love to justice, well worthy to beare that title." No wonder, then, that Reginald Hardyng was proud of his ancestry, and of a family which had descended in unbroken line from this worthy namesake.

In fifteen hundred and fifty-eight, the "large and capital mansion" of La Vacherie, with its chapel, its garden, and fishpond, was abandoned by the Hardyngs; who, in its stead, erected the noble Tudor pile at Lingfield Chase. Its park was

carved into small farms, to many of which were given names descriptive of their origin —Old Park, New Park, Park House, High Park; but nothing is now discernible of the old mansion save some small remains of its foundations and a part of the moat which encompassed it.

Although bewailing this desertion of their ancient home, the Hardyngs could not fail to be great gainers by the change. Sir Christopher, grandson of that Sir Christopher and Agas his wife whose bodies lay on the north side of the church at Chudlegh, erected the main body of the Chase which, to this day, and despite the buffetings of three centuries, remains as solid and likely to endure as when Sir Christopher put the finishing touches to his then new home. A good man and true was this Sir Christopher—a gentleman who had been twice knight of the shire and once sheriff for the county; and who had

received the honour of knighthood at the hands of the Earl of Leicester in my lord Lincoln's garden at Pirford, the Queen being present. A temperate, yet hospitable and scholarly man he was; like many another who lived in the prosperous days of the same great queen. For over the hall door of his new mansion, but within the porch, he had caused to be inscribed the words—

"Invidiæ claudor, pateo sed semper amico:"

over the kitchen door—

"Fami, non Gulæ:"

over that of the buttery—

"Siti, non Ebrietati:"

and over the parlour—

"Probis, non Pravis:"

proving thereby that he understood the purport of true and Christian liberty,—friendship, untinctured with envy; a natural satisfaction of the appetite, as distinct from

gluttony; the quenching of an inartificial thirst without sottishness; and the maintenance of all that is honourable, excellent, virtuous, side by side with the rejection of what is distorted, perverse, and vicious.

Early one July afternoon, Mr. Hardyng had left the Chase that he might cast an eye over the labourers in the harvest-field, —therein being at one with old Hesiod, who exhorted his thick-pated countrymen to pray for a good harvest, yet to do so with their hands upon the plough. Indeed, Mr. Hardyng had no thought to leave the garnering of his corn entirely to the bailiff, be the latter never so proper a man. That afternoon, too, the sun was shining brightly, a warm wind was blowing through the stooks—he would see whether he could not get some portion of the crop saved before any sudden storm could damage its quality or taint its bright colour.

And the sun was shining through the

mullioned windows of good Sir Christopher's great hall, making its usually so cool atmosphere unwontedly pleasant; was shining, also, through the wide mullioned window of his old parlour, down upon its faded carpet, but not so far into the room as to interfere with the comfort of Mrs. Hardyng and her daughters, who were busy with their work at its far end. The governess had departed for a time, leaving Blanche and Agnes to their own devices. They could wander about the grounds, or take their books to one of the shady willows, which overhung the stews, just when and as they listed. But the afternoon was so intensely hot, the sun cast such narrow shadows, that to-day they preferred to remain indoors.

Blanche sat plying her needle with unwearied fingers, thinking not only about the work itself, but of the comfort it would prove to poor bedridden old Redman, Linn's

grandfather, when it was finished and he could don a new, clean shirt. Agnes was restless. She was not fond of sewing at any time; and just then it was so very hot. She had to run the needle so often through the emery-cushion to keep it bright, and she was for ever and anon raising her head to look out of the window and ascertain whether the shadows were not lengthening,—the which she did so heedlessly that often the needle pricked her finger instead of reappearing, as it should have done, from out the calico. And its many pricks made her still hotter, and stirred her temper, and at last suffused her dark eyes with tears. Warm though the air out of doors, she would far rather be lying under a densely-clad willow, watching through its trailing branches the dragon-flies as, chameleon-like they sported in the sunlight, or the lazy father-long-legs as he brooded sleepily upon the stagnant water.

"Really, Agnes," exclaimed her mother, "I wish you would sit still. Look how quiet Blanche is."

"But I'm not Blanche, mamma. And, what is more, I never shall be."

"No, dear; but you might try to be as good."

"I could not be as good, if I tried ever so much," cried the young beauty, tossing back the curls which had tumbled over her face. "I think she must have been born good."

"You might try."

"What is the use of trying, mamma dear, when a person has been born naughty, like I must have been?"

"Nonsense, Agnes! We can all be good, if we try."

"I cannot, mamma. I never could. Oh, that horrid needle!" she exclaimed suddenly. "It has pricked me again—awfully."

"Awfully!" repeated Mrs. Hardyng.

"Little girls ought never to use such a word. Where can you have picked it up?"

"Martin always uses it, dear. He calls everything awfully dreadful, or awfully stunning, or awfully jolly." Having said which, Agnes threw down her work and skipped to the window, whence she could gaze down the long, straight drive across the park, to the lodge beyond. Then, she sighed wearily. There was nothing in sight that she had not seen that day at least a dozen times,—the cattle, the well-cropped turf, the familiar trees. She was about to return to her work, when the distant gate swung open, and two boys, mounted on their ponies, passing through it, came trotting up the drive. Her dark eyes sparkled, and a brightening smile scattered all traces of her discontent.

"Mamma!" she cried. "Martin and Arthur are riding up the drive. Come along, Blanche; let us go to meet them!"

And, without waiting to see whether or not her sister followed, she ran from the room.

Blanche put her work neatly together, before she passed through the hall to rejoin Agnes in the porch.

"How nice of you to come so soon!" exclaimed the latter, as the boys drew rein at the door, and addressing her words especially to Martin. "When did you get back? And how did you get on this last term? And oh, what a lovely pony!"

"Isn't he!" cried Martin, patting its glossy neck, and answering the last question first, as the one most ultimately connected with his thoughts. "Isn't he! You should see him gallop, Agnes. And he can jump. Gammon says that he jumps quite as well as Arthur's."

"Do let me see him jump—now—this afternoon," implored the girl eagerly.

"If you are going into the sun," interposed Mrs. Hardyng, who had been talking

with Arthur, "you must run for your hats. You will be sure to find a man in the stables, Martin, who can fix a leaping-bar in one of the paddocks."

When the girls returned, the four young people hurried away, bent upon testing the new pony's jumping powers to their utmost. The head groom went with them, and soon set up a few light hurdles in a spot where the turf was still moist and springy.

Over these Martin put the pony, now at racing speed and then more slowly. He had good hands, and stuck well to the pig-skin; of both which accomplishments the pony seemed well aware, for he responded to the slightest hint.

"He is a real beauty!" exclaimed Agnes excitedly, when at last Martin pulled up at her side. "And he does jump well, doesn't he, Parker? What is his name, Martin?"

"Negro. You can't find a single fleck

on his black coat, except the white star on his forehead!"

Agnes stroked the pony's soft nose with her softer hand. Then, a bright idea appeared to strike her. "Martin, I should so like to ride him; do let me try him over the hurdles, there's a dear."

The boy hesitated. His treasure had been so recently acquired that he scarcely liked to trust it to other hands.

"Martin, dear, do let me try!" pleaded Agnes yet again, looking into his face with her "black-beaded" eyes.

Martin's hesitation was not proof against an appeal so irresistible.

"Do you think she can manage him?" he asked, turning to Parker.

"He seems good-tempered enough, sir. And, as for Miss Agnes, I'd back her to ride anything in our stable. If it were Miss Blanche now, I don't know as I'd go so far."

"Right you are, then," cried Martin, his last fear vanishing in presence of Parker's assured confidence. "Run to the stable, there's a good fellow, and bring a side-saddle."

Parker soon returned with the saddle, which, happily, fitted Negro to a nicety; and then Martin had the satisfaction of lifting his fay to the pony's back, of feeling her curls brush gently across his glowing cheek, and of placing her tiny foot in the stirrup.

She gave him one look—one which he remembered too often, perhaps, in years to come—and then she bounded forward, as an arrow shot from a strong bow, in a mad, delicious course round the short-swarded meadow. That finished, she pulled up suddenly.

"He's heavenly! He's lovely!" she exclaimed, her blood well warmed and her eyes flashing with excitement. "Give me

a lead, Arthur, and I'll put him at the hurdles."

Arthur left Blanche's side and did as he was commanded. It was impossible to do otherwise, for the girl's exaltation was irresistible.

Almost at his side, but a little to his bridle hand, she took the hurdles one after the other; her hair streaming in the breeze, herself immovable in the saddle; a Penthesilea, wafted from far Themiscyra; a sweet vision, endowed with youth and courage.

"I told yer how it wud be," muttered Parker between his teeth. "I knew as how she could sit un well! There bean't no young lady in these parts as can hold a candle to un!"

Martin thought so too. He felt, as he put a hand on either side her waist to lift her from the saddle, that he was more her slave than ever. And Agnes was very tender towards him, that afternoon. She

did not play the coquette nor try his temper. It was so great a relief to have left her sewing and the hot, cramped parlour; to be there in the open, elated by her gallop across the turf, and her many flights over the hurdles. And it was Martin who had procured her this enjoyment; and so, to reward him, she walked by his side quietly, prattling about many things as he best liked to hear her prattle.

They were nearing the house when Arthur exclaimed—

"My word, Blanche! I had almost forgotten mother's letter."

"You stupid fellow!" she said, half jokingly, half seriously. "How came you to do that? If it had been Martin, I shouldn't have so much wondered."

Martin was too busily occupied with his companion to notice the remark.

"Is it very important, Arthur?" she continued.

"That depends on what you think about it. Mother wants Mrs. Hardyng, you, and Agnes, to come over to Chudlegh on Monday afternoon, early, so that we can have tea at the old lime-kiln."

"Then I pronounce it to be most important. Nothing could be more delightful in this hot weather than tea out of doors and under the shade of those old oak trees."

When Arthur had delivered his letter, Mrs. Hardyng, at the earnest entreaty of her daughters, made no objection to the proposal, and entrusted the boys with a note accepting Mrs. Ffrench's invitation.

The weather had been more broken since that Wednesday, but with Monday again came a change for the better, and a bright, though not too bright, blue sky; just such a time as the farmers wanted, and one quite perfect for those who had leisure to besport them in the woods. After lunch, Arthur and Martin, having inveigled Neddy

from his feeding-ground, adjusted his panniers, and loaded him with kettle, tea-pot, saucepans, and other requisites for a tea *al fresco*. He was a wise old beast, this Ned. He stood perfectly regardless whilst his young masters pulled his panniers first this way and then that, or weighted one more heavily than the other. He was a wise old beast, who had carried them in the same panniers when they could scarcely toddle; pure mouse-coloured, with a dark stripe extending along his spine and sloping downwards on either shoulder; one whose age it was difficult to estimate, but whose long ears, which flopped continuously, and whose yet bright eye, betokened a firm intention of clinging to life for many a year to come.

By the time Neddy was loaded, all were ready to make a start and to follow that sedate animal up the steep path which twisted through the woods and ascended to

a rough cart track which crossed at right angles, and by the side of which, in a small oak-surrounded glade, stood the lime-kiln. This was a ruin, or well nigh such; half-filled with its topmost stones which had fallen inwards; and, as to its outer walls, covered with luxuriant brambles; just the place in which to boil a kettle, or to camp on a fine, star-lit night.

And so Arthur, and Martin, and Percy thought it. For Percy had been invited that afternoon, greatly to Martin's vexation. The two had been better friends since the fight at Rothbury; that is, Percy had ceased to taunt Martin as he had previously done; but, notwithstanding, the latter would have preferred his absence. For although Percy dared not annoy Martin openly, he knew the weak places in his armour, and could give him many a sly and biting stab.

His presence, too, was the more unfortunate inasmuch as Agnes seemed to be

altogether differently minded to what she had been when last they parted. This was not noticeable so long as the boys were unloading Neddy, searching for sticks with which to boil the kettle, or spreading the cloth beneath a giant oak hard by the kiln. Then, Martin had no time to note the change. But he did so when, tea being ready, they took their places on the turf. For Agnes, whom he had carefully disposed at his right hand, gave all her attention to Percy, who was on her other side. If Martin offered her a piece of cake, she preferred to take another from the plate which Percy was careful to present at the same moment. Did she want more tea, she would entrust her cup to Percy and not to him—pretending the while not to notice her young admirer's rising gloom.

"Triviality all this," as some may say. But by no means a triviality to Martin. "Ce qui nous tente, c'est moins le taillis

fleuri, que ce qu'il cache. La vie est peu de chose auprès de ce qu'elle prépare." Exactly so. The outward neglect which the girl accorded him was but the husk; the kernel of his pain lay deeper;—in a wonder that she could be so heartless when he was so much in earnest, in a possible destruction of his hope, in an indefinable fear lest he had mistaken her character.

Too young to love, aye, and to suffer, most wise philosopher! What time can that be? Indeed, has time aught to do with the matter? Is it not rather a question of degree?

CHAPTER V.

THE LAST OF ROTHBURY.

Next morning, Agnes was sorry for what she had done. When directing her light artillery against Martin, she had but obeyed the promptings of a nature which inclined her to coquet. She could not have resisted any such little affectations, even had the consequences been likely to prove more serious. "Her mother had looked down into her eyes and left in them the light of her own." But the feeling that she had done wrong and given pain, that Martin had deserved better at her hands, saddened her girlish heart and caused it to yearn over the wounds which she had experimentally, yet needlessly inflicted.

Nor had she long to wait before she could apply a balm. Notwithstanding the rebuff of yesterday, Martin saddled Negro and rode to the Chase the following afternoon; on which occasion Agnes met him in the drive, all beaming with smiles and in the most penitent of moods. One look was sufficient to dissolve Martin's doubts and to make him once more the happiest of boys. He was young, buoyed by a courage as yet unhindered by defeat; joyously looking forward to a life whose paths were to wend through a country infinitely pleasant. Such was his, at that time, happy privilege—a condition far better than that of Percy, who, though so young, suspected, and wormed, and plotted; who was too wrapt in self to read, or even attempt to read, the natural beauties within his reach.

Agnes and Martin, then, were reconciled; nor did the girl, on the many occasions during that summer's holiday when she

might have done so, attempt to repeat the episode of the lime-kiln. She was rather gentle and kind, until Martin felt that this was indeed to love.

But he could not always be at the Chase, and many a day he spent with Arthur and Linn—noting where the largest coveys basked on the fallows at midday, or fed in early morning; or setting traps for vermin; or laying in the "old river," during the cool twilight, night-lines for eels. Then they would feed the young pheasants in the large oak wood which stood behind the Hall; and there, sometimes, they would lie beneath the trees, hidden by the matted hazels, and smoke rank tobacco in the hot clay pipes which Linn had procured from the village shop. Martin took to a pipe kindly; but Arthur not so kindly, he being occasionally visited by qualms which induced him to lay his own upon the ground, after a first few whiffs.

At which times, and after the respite of a few minutes, Linn would urge him to take it up, with an assurance that "un wud soon get used to't." Linn thoroughly enjoyed these idle hours; and, as the tobacco was obtained with his young masters' money, encouraged their frequent repetition. Nor was he unsuccessful. It was so pleasant to lie in the shade; to do so presented such a contrast to the discipline of school; and then the pipes brought with them a sense of manliness which was highly tasteful to lads of their spirit and active nature.

Martin, on such occasions, would rest his back against a tree, feeling that he was almost a man, and dream of the day when he should be a soldier—for such was the profession which he had chosen. To him a military career seemed the only one worth thinking about. It presented visions of glory and danger; of thundering charges and rattling musketry; of brave

deeds and bold hearts, the like of which no other life could offer.

Thus he sat one sunny afternoon, his back against a tree, plunged in martial dreams, an imaginary hero, singing softly to himself—

> "Keep not standing fixed and rooted,
> Briskly venture, briskly roam;
> Head and hand, where'er thou foot it,
> And stout heart are still at home."

"Hallo, Martin!" cried Arthur; "brooding over the poetry of war?"

The words recalled Martin to himself.

"I suppose that I must have been," he sighed.

"Ah, well!" exclaimed his brother. "Luckily the world's round enough, and wide enough, to satisfy all comers. But I can't, for the life of me, see why you should be so eager to slit another man's throat."

"What soldier ever thinks of such a thing?" cried Martin indignantly.

"Perhaps not," retorted Arthur. "But I've read about fellows who got into rifle-pits and took pot-shots at the enemy with as little compunction as if they'd been shooting a rabbit."

"Such fellows could never have been true soldiers," said Martin.

"Just what I think. But men have been known to do it, over and over again."

"It doan't seem hardly fair, that doan't," interposed Linn. "I ne'er kicks up a hare but what I gies un some law, afore I shoots."

"Quite right too, Linn," said Arthur.

"But I'm plaguy sure o' one thing. Naythur you nor Maister Martin would ne'er do the likes."

"Not we!" exclaimed the boys.

"Yer see," continued Linn, thus encouraged, "it doan't a-pear in the coorse of natur' for one chap to pot at another

chap without a-gien him fair warning. Do it now, Maister Arthur?"

"It's cowardly, Linn."

"So I should ha' considered, maister Arthur. An' as I said afore, I knows as 'ow nayther you nor Maister Martin would do the likes."

Martin felt some disgust at his romantic dreams being so intruded upon. He felt with Linn that he was incapable of any such action as that which Arthur had recalled; that he could not even be a mercenary, or indeed, fight at all, except for his queen and country.

"Anyhow, Arthur," he growled, "you'd never do for a soldier."

"I don't intend to be one. And what's more, we can't all go into the army; there wouldn't be room in it for every fellow."

But, room or no room, Martin was right. Arthur was not cut out for a soldier. He

preferred a still life; a position from which he could view, undisturbed, the throbbing crowd; a secure bank on which he could pause and gather lessons from the hurrying wavelets as they tossed and foamed over the shallows. His temperament was contemplative rather than brilliant; observant and able to deduce truth; given to abstract thought, and impatient of any society which might pervert its clearer judgment. His father had devoted him to the lot of an eldest son. He was already at a public school; and, when he left that, was to go to a university. Then, after he had taken his degree, a year or two at Camptown would render him none the less fitted to fulfil the requirements of a county position, and his presence at the office might prove a stepping-stone towards the recovery of that thirty thousand pounds which Mr. Ffrench had destined for Martin, but which was still locked up in the business.

"Anyhow, Arthur," growled Martin, "you would never do for a soldier."

"Noa, Maister Martin," quoth Linn; "I'm thinkin' as you'd make the best sodger of the two. An' I often says, says I, to the chaps in th' village, as the folks in Lunnon 'ull find it plaguy hard to beat the likes o' you."

Martin smiled complacently, well pleased at the flattery, though possibly accepting it at its true value.

"An' when yer goes a-sodgering," continued Linn, with a determined air, "I goes along wi' you. I've said so more nor a year agone; an' I've told fayther what I've got a mind to do. Fayther can't stop me; an' the squire, he can't stop me; an' I doan't think as 'ow yer could yerself," he wound up doggedly.

After which solemn declaration the boys silently smoked their pipes, each busied with the reflections called forth by the

late conversation. Presently, a broad grin overspread Linn's features.

"Ay, but, Maister Martin, us had a game, sure-ly, at th' lodge this mornin'!"

"Eh?" said Martin, rousing himself. "How was that, Linn?"

"Well, Missus Stemp—yer knows Missus Stemp o' Garston—she'd lost her cat, an' she swore as 'ow we'd had him in a trap, an' as 'ow she'd prove it. Yer see, I thowt no more abun the matter, till this mornin', when, maybe about six o'clock, I see'd th' old girl a-standin' afore the wall where us hangs the vermin as we've catch'd. Bless us, if she weren't a sobbin' an' a going on like mad. In coorse I knowed well enou' what she was arter, an' what she'd seed. But I looks as innocent as a babe, an' says—

"'What's up, Missus Stemp, I says?'

"An' then she took on all the more, an' swears as 'ow she'd found her Tom s figure-

head a-hangin' on th' wall, along wid the others.

"'Nonsens,' says I, as bold as brass.

"''Taint no nonsens,' she says. 'I'd know 'im among a thousand, an' I'll tell the squire,' she says.

"But I wouldna' give in to un; an' at last she goes off, a-muttering to herself, she did, for sure."

Even Arthur could not help smiling at Linn's account of Mrs. Stemp's trouble.

"I doan't know," continued Linn, "as 'ow I've laughed so much sin' Christmas-time, when Maister Percy blazed into the middle of Farmer Killick's ducks as un were floating on th' old river."

"That was your fault, Linn. You shouldn't have told him that they were wild ones."

"I couldna' have helped it, to save my loife, Maister Arthur. He's so plaguy innocent, he be. A reg'lar town-bred un, I

calls him. Darned if I think un knows a Aylesbury from a widgeon."

"Anyhow, you'd better be careful about the cats, Linn."

"Lookee now, Maister Arthur, a man can't presarve cats an' birds at one an' the same time. If I doan't trap the cats, yer may whistle arter the birds. I might as lief not shoot a Chudlegh beagle when he comes huntin' arter the leverets o' spring-time. I mun ha' caught a matter o' thirty cats the last six week."

"Trap every one you can," exclaimed Martin eagerly; "and, as for those beagles that are for ever roaming about the place, put a good ounce of shot into the stern of every mother's son of them, and see if that will keep them in the street."

They were pleasant days, those in the old woods; and much did it exercise both Arthur and Martin when the return of the elder to Sagitta Hill, and of the younger

to Rothbury had become inevitable. But Martin had now been for two terms at Rothbury, and his position there was a bed of roses, when compared to what it had been during the first unhappy weeks. Morgan had left—his parents finding that private tuition could do no more for him than a public school had been able to do in other days. After his removal, a tyranny had been succeeded by a "Directory," and Martin benefited by the change. Under the mild sway of Jones and Gurney, he found the place quite different to what it had been. He ranked now somewhat as Glyn, Godfrey, and Hubbard had done when first he went there; and moreover, during the last term, he had often been able to protect Percy from the buffets which a better knowledge of that young gentleman's character induced his companions to bestow more frequently than temperately. So Percy had clung to his old friend,

proclaimed their close relationship when at Chudlegh, and sought immunity beneath his wing. Then, Martin's first victory, and his resistance to all farther attempts upon his peace, had produced respect.

It was the evening of their return, and the boys had retired to their several dormitories. Percy, Martin, and Glyn, were still in the same room, along with Gurney, to whom had been allotted Morgan's vacant bed. They had gone upstairs earlier than usual, and were busy unpacking their portmanteaus and filling their chests of drawers. At last, from *his* portmanteau, Percy drew forth a dusty, cobwebby-looking bottle.

"Come, you fellows," he exclaimed, "let's have a drink! Unpacking makes one awfully dry."

"What have you got?" queried Glyn, desisting from his work.

"Never mind what it is, old man. Taste

a drop; it won't do you any harm." And Percy handed a glass first to Glyn, then to Gurney, and lastly to Martin; after which he poured out a bumper for himself.

"Why, Percy!" cried Martin, smacking his lips; "it's port wine."

"And what if it be! It won't hurt you. I've two more bottles, when this is done."

"But, I say," continued Martin, "your father never gave you port wine to bring to school!"

"Not he," said Percy contemptuously. "I didn't ask him."

"Robbed the cellar, eh?" put in Glyn, winking at Martin. "Tell us how you managed it, Percy. Anyhow, I wish I were blessed with an equally confiding pareant."

Percy was indued with too thick a hide to note the irony of Glyn's words. To him the theft of a bottle of wine from his father's cellar conveyed no idea of shame.

"The night before I came away I went to the cellar with the butler; and, whilst he was getting some Madeira for the governor from a bin in a deep recess, I put the port through the window, having broken a pane in the morning. I'd have taken more, if the old fool had not come along just as I'd put the third bottle out. Then I fished up the bottles from the outside, with a noose fixed at the end of a stick."

"You're a nice fellow," cried Martin disdainfully. "I wouldn't cheat my old dad like that, not for a dozen bottles of port."

"You wouldn't, eh?" sneered the other. "Well, you smoke with Linn in the woods behind the Hall, and that's every bit as bad. Linn told me you did."

"Shut up!" exclaimed Martin angrily. "A quiet smoke on the sly isn't the same as stealing wine from a cellar, is it, you fellows?"

And, all agreeing that it was not, Percy's attempt to involve Martin in the same category with himself fell harmlessly to the ground. But his words bore fruit, and in a way that he had not intended; for two or three nights afterwards, as they were talking in their beds, Glyn exclaimed—

"I say, Martin, it's getting too cold for cricket, and it's a long way too hot for football; why shouldn't we get pipes and baccy, and have a smoke in Rainford Wood? Old Walford would never be any the wiser."

"He'd soon find out," said Martin, "if we were to buy them in the village."

"Of course he would," acquiesced Gurney. "The whole place would know what we had done in less than six hours after we had been to the shop."

Glyn was forced to admit that such would be the case.

"Well," he suggested, "let us tell the

carrier to get them next time he goes to market!"

"I doubt if he would," objected Gurney; "and if he did, the thing would get wind that way, as quickly as the other."

"I know how we can manage it," exclaimed Percy. "Martin's people are on the Continent, and he can write to the gardener for a hamper of fruit, and enclose a letter for Linn, telling him to smuggle some pipes and tobacco into the hamper. Linn's wideawake, and he'd do anything for Martin."

"Bravo, Percy," cried Glyn, highly delighted. "He's a regular genius, isn't he, Gurney?"

All were of the same opinion—all, that is, except Martin, who faintly protested against the plan.

"Nonsense, old fellow!" exclaimed Glyn. "Who'll be any the wiser? and what harm can it do?"

So Martin at last consented, and on the morrow indited two letters; one to the gardener, requesting him to send the hamper; the other to Linn, which ran as follows:—

"DEAR LINN,

"I have written to Price, telling him to send me a hamper of fruit; and I want you to put into it a dozen clays, a pound of bird's-eye, and a few boxes of vesuvians. Don't let Price know what you are doing. You can easily put the things into the hamper when his back is turned; or you can offer to sew the lid down.

"Yours, truly,

"MARTIN FFRENCH."

Without question 'tis a curious code of morality that schoolboys have manufactured for their guidance. Under its well-defined laws it becomes "low" to deceive one of their number; but almost everything

short of the lie direct is legitimate as against a master. Yet, despite an anomaly so manifest, boys, year after year, emerge from their several schools, a frank, honourable crowd, none the worse, but apparently the better for having obeyed its dicta. Thoroughly to understand why this should be, is not easy. Possibly one reason lies in the fact that they have never forgotten the meaning of the word, "ought." They have never flown in the face of what they conceived to be their moral duty, however limited their conception of that duty. They have never, so to speak, torn down the word "ought," and substituted in its place the words, "I will, betide what may." Thus, Martin was esteemed for giving Percy the thrashing which he had so richly deserved; Percy was despised for robbing his father's cellar; and yet Mr. Walford might be deceived, so long as he did not find them out—that was his affair, not theirs.

Percy was quite correct when he had declared Linn to be wideawake. Early the following week, a hamper came to the rectory, addressed to Martin. The study door was bolted whilst the boys unfastened it and dipped into its contents. On the top of a thick layer of dry moss, which appeared when the lid was thrown back, lay a soiled and crumpled piece of paper, looking as if it had been carried for days in the dirtiest of pockets. Martin, taking it up, read aloud the few words which it contained, and which had apparently been written at the cost of much time and great labour—at least to judge from the numerous blots and many erasures. It ran thus:—

"Onurd Sur,

"ive obaid yur onurd comands an yer'll find the bacca an pipes an vesuviands lien at bottum of baskit. Onurd sur, Juno's gotten a litter of sevn pupps,

al of wich is doin wel. Tyman pears a bit mangy, but ive putt a peece of sulfer in is water, and hes bean adoin better ever sin. Onurd sur, the faisants is goin on fyne.

"L. REDMAN."

"Sur, i got the bacca from the shop on tic."

Next, Martin lifted out of the hamper, first the moss, and then some vine-leaves; after which came several bunches of grapes, and, below these, layer upon layer of peaches, greengages, and purple plums. And lower still, protected by another thick bed of moss, were the pipes and tobacco, together with half a dozen boxes of vesuvians. The hamper arrived on Tuesday, and until the next afternoon the contraband articles were stowed away in the play-boxes which lined the passage outside the study.

The following morning, Mr. Walford seemed more prosy, the school-hours longer,

the dinner more tedious, than they had ever been. But at last came afternoon, like all afternoons must come, an *inevitabile tempus* faced with pleasant anticipation, but possibly backed with something of disappointment. When dinner was over, off rushed the boys, and, having filled their pockets with the contraband articles, bent their steps in the direction of Rainford Wood. This was a large enclosure planted with Scotch firs, carpeted with a thick bed of decaying leaves, and scenting the air with a resinous odour. The lads threw themselves upon the ground—Martin in his favourite position, his back resting against the bole of one of the largest trees. The pipes were charged, and all looked to Martin for a lead. He struck a vesuvian, and the others, one by one—some diffidently, some with greater assurance—followed his example.

Martin felt happy enough. The after-

noons, spent with Arthur and Linn amid the hazels at Chudlegh, had hardened him against any bad effects. But the others were by no means so fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, inured. Here and there a face began to pale; whilst, now and again, some one would leave the group to relieve his qualms at a distance. But it is with smoking as with other things—habit becomes a second nature; and, after the first two or three attempts, the lads managed to enjoy their pipes with a fair measure of success.

And now, a new phase began to develop itself in Martin's career at Rothbury. As his greater prowess and high spirit helped him to become a leader and favourite among the boys, so did he lose caste with Mr. Walford. Possibly he got more careless about his work; possibly he found it difficult to serve two masters with equal zeal. During the first term, he had sought

a refuge from other trouble in his books; now, in higher favour with his companions, his books became of secondary importance. It is often so, and probably the circumstance is to be attributed to a natural reaction after great and prolonged tension. In any case, his tutor frowned upon Martin more severely; but it was on a certain Sunday that he fell into deeper disgrace than usual.

Mr. Walford was in the habit of preaching very long and very dry sermons; and to the boys, who sat in a high-backed, square pew, in company with Mrs. Walford and Patty, they appeared most wearisome. As for Martin, he became so tired of looking at his boots, fiddling with his hands, and sitting with demure countenance during those long half-hours, that any accident which served to break the drear monotony was doubly welcome. The next pew belonged to the squire; and this, each Sunday morning, was brightened by

the presence of the squire's only daughter —a fair little maid, with dark eyes and flaxen hair, who often recalled Agnes to Martin's thoughts. She, too, appeared to consider those tedious homilies to be of an excessive dryness, for ever and anon during their delivery she would jump upon a tall hassock, and peering over Mrs. Walford's bonnet, smile pleasantly at the boys, and more particularly at Martin. Naturally, he was ever on the look-out for so sweet a vision, and returned her smiles with interest. For the most part, Mrs. Walford sat with eyes bent upon the floor, but on the present occasion she caught him in the act.

Martin returned to the rectory, unconscious that he had been discovered. But the boys, on entering the dining-room, had not taken their seats when the good lady, pointing him out with stiff fore-finger, exclaimed, "That boy—that boy—laughed in church!"

Mr. Walford's countenance became ominously severe and sternly grieved. Patty hung down her blushing cheeks, sorrowing at the awful nature of the crime.

"That boy—that boy," repeated the good lady, "laughed in church!"

Then Mr. Walford spoke.

"I am shocked—terribly shocked, Ffrench, at such profaneness. I am shocked—deeply shocked. You will learn the epistle and gospel for the day; and to-night, when the others remain for supper, you will retire to your room."

Which sentence having been pronounced, they sat down to a dinner which proved to be ice-surrounded and dismally formal—the enormity of Martin's offence pressing as a great weight upon all present.

But worse than this was to follow. Rothbury happened to be a very small place, and, like most villages of the kind, its appetite for gossip was insatiable, whilst

the matter wherewith to satisfy its craving for the same was undeniably scarce. Under such circumstances, it was most unlikely that the pleasant smoking parties instituted by Mr. Walford's pupils could for long escape the notice of its village gossips. Once laid hold of by these, the news soon filtered to the servants at the rectory, and through them to the ears of the reverend gentleman himself.

It was impossible to allow so great a breach of discipline to continue. It must be stayed at once, and the ringleaders severely punished. Accordingly, the boys were summoned with due formality into the dining-room, and Mr. Walford, giving a free rein to his wrath, spoke with unusual severity.

"Boys!" he exclaimed. "I find that you have taken to the filthy habit of smoking."

The boys were dumbfounded by the

abruptness of the charge; until at last, Martin, being of a bolder disposition than the others, pleaded guilty to the indictment.

"Then," said Mr. Walford with increased acidity, "go at once—every one of you—and bring me all the pipes and tobacco in your possession."

They returned one by one, and, as they did so, were commanded to lay the unclean things upon the table.

"Boys!" said their tutor, when the last pupil had returned, and pointing to the heap, "where did you obtain all this?"

"Please, sir, I got them," exclaimed Martin, quite bold, now that the Rubicon had been crossed.

"Oh! You got them, sir. Exactly what I should have expected. You have idled over your work, scoffed in church, and now done your best to contaminate your companions. I don't think, sir, that I

should be right, when considering my duty to the parents of these boys and to my son, to permit you to remain any longer beneath this roof. You are incorrigible, sir, incorrigible," he continued, pacing the room angrily. "But the matter is far too important to be settled hastily. Retire to the study, every one of you—except you, sir," he added, turning to Martin. "*You* must go to your room, and remain there for the rest of the day. You shall be told in the morning what punishment I intend to inflict."

Poor Martin! He went upstairs altogether crestfallen. He had been brave, straightforward, and truthful. He had taken the blame upon his own shoulders, and none of his fellow-culprits had attempted to share his lot. Conscience whispered that he was not quite so bad as Mr. Walford had painted him. He might have been thoughtless, and had no doubt

been idle, but he was not one wilfully to contaminate others. He felt that he had been unjustly and hardly treated. Good heavens! If he should be expelled! And, at the mere thought, rebellious tears sprang into his eyes, and he threw himself upon his bed in an access of despair. What would his father and mother think? And how could he make them believe that he had not done anything so very wrong? Then, what stories Percy would be able to tell Agnes! And he sobbed—great, heaving, impenitent sobs—smarting under a sense of the injustice to which he had been treated.

Mr. Walford, although narrow-minded and severe, was not unjust according to his lights. But he, like Martin, had attempted to serve two masters, an accomplishment to which few can attain—and certainly not a man of Mr. Walford's calibre. He had found that the care of his parish, which

was small, and the weekly manufacture of platitudes into discourses, did not occupy the whole of his time; and to these he had added education. By so doing he had increased his income, but not the hours at his disposal; and the latter, which had once proved more than sufficient for his needs, became inadequate for a proper discharge of the additional tax with which they had been burdened. The study which ought to have been given to the character of each pupil was almost neglected. He judged by consequents only, and had no time in which to ponder the motives which had led up to the consequents.

In the present instance, and fortunately for Martin, a night's reflection tended to mitigate the extreme fierceness of his wrath. Then, next morning's post brought a letter from Mr. Ffrench, in which he mentioned that there would be a vacancy for his son, after the Christmas holidays, at

Sagitta Hill, and that, consequently, the boy would not again return to Rothbury.

This communication gave Mr. Walford serious ground for reflection. Were he to expel Martin, some stir would necessarily be created, and the lad's prospects would be seriously compromised. It appeared that, under any circumstances, the boy would only remain at Rothbury for a few weeks longer. No; on second thoughts it would be better that Martin should stop where he was until Christmas. By the adoption of such a course the prestige of the school would not be affected, and he could salve his conscience by writing an account of what had happened to Mr. St. George, the master with whom Martin was to be placed, an account which could be made to reach that gentleman about the time when the lad might be expected to arrive at Sagitta Hill.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

It is unnecessary to follow the daily incidents of Martin's life during the next four years—years which were, for the most part, spent at Sagitta Hill. Unnecessary, not because any such fragment of the three score years and ten, which men have been taught to regard as their allotted term, might prove less interesting than the remainder; but because Father Time keeps busy with his scythe, and the sand in his hour-glass is ever running. Life at a public school has given matter for many closely printed sheets; but, notwithstanding, it must retain an impress of things worth record. It is a life which, restricted in itself, must

contain the germs of a more expansive future. Granted that much has been written about it and thought about it, spoken about it and argued about it; that one learned Dominus after another has revealed its secrets and upheld its teaching; that a no-less-learned Professor, albeit a foreigner, has declared it a glaring anomaly; —it must ever contain things worthy of note. For, as "the great Herr Minister von Goethe has penetratingly remarked, 'Man is properly the only object that interests man,'" and the boy being, metaphorically, the father of the man, the latter must always feel a deepest interest in the motives, the actions, and principles of his forerunner. Public school-life, then, has often been described *currente calamo*—its contests, its backslidings, its triumphs—but so great is the variety of character which it exhibits, so manifold its hopes, its fears, its aims, that the subject can never be

exhausted, although it may require, in these later days, to be handled with a perceptive touch.

So far as Martin is concerned, he went to Sagitta Hill indued with a far greater experience than when he had first gone to Rothbury. The bullying which he had there encountered enabled him once for all to fight his own battles and to sustain his position. The agony which he had suffered at the mere thought of expulsion; the fear which had possessed him lest he should prove both a sorrow and reproach to his parents, a leper to be put out from the camp of his earlier friends, had sunk deeply into his heart and produced an effect never to be forgotten. His carelessness had become more subdued; his idleness had received a check; and, although by no means perfected, he had taken a vast stride forward, and in the right direction.

So when, the first morning after his arrival at Sagitta Hill, the butler tumbled into the room, rattling his keys, lighting one after another the tallow dips, and shouting at the top of his voice that the hounds were in the park, Martin jumped out of bed, stimulated no doubt by the ruse anent the hounds, but determined to do his best, come what might. This he did to such purpose that, after the lapse of a few weeks, Mr. St. George took occasion to remark that he could not understand the drift of Mr. Walford's letter; that, instead of being idle, careless, and untrustworthy, he had so far found him to be careful, diligent, and conscientious.

Martin's eye sparkled at the unexpected praise, and he registered a mental vow to deserve the character which he had so soon attained.

Poor Mr. Walford! His intentions were

no doubt good, but he was not didactic. He fitted the boys to his work, and not the work to his boys; acted as if they were made for the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath for them; charged them to touch not, taste not, handle not, to do this and to do that; but failed to point the moral of his ordinances. And Martin was thankful to have left both him and Rothbury, and to be in a larger sphere.

He had been at Sagitta Hill two years when, one evening, he received a summons to the library. It was at the time of the general "exeat," when all, who wished to do so, could take a short peep at their friends from Friday evening until Monday morning. But Martin's people were on the Continent, and he had received no invitation to spend this exeat elsewhere. He must remain, the solitary tenant of his room, and in a school more than half depeopled.

Entering the library, he found Mr. St. George seated at a table whereon lay a heap of gold and silver, a sixpenny "Bradshaw," and a pile of letters.

"By the way, Ffrench," said the tutor, handing him a letter, "I have a note from your father, requesting me to give you an exeat to-morrow. Let me see," he continued, taking up the "Bradshaw" and opening it at a page which had been previously turned down; "the fare to town is two shillings; from town to Kirkford, seven and sixpence; then there will be a cab across London and the omnibus to the station. Ah, well! Here are fifteen shillings and your exeat paper. And, Ffrench—I hope that you will enjoy yourself. You have worked hard, and deserve a holiday."

Shaking the boy's hand, he dismissed him with a kindly nod.

"By the bye," he added, as Martin was

about to close the door, "send Todd, if you please."

Martin was completely dazed, and scarcely knew how to act. It was quite clear that Mr. St. George, in his hurry, had made a mistake. One glance at the letter had been sufficient to prove that it was not from his father, but from Mr. Todd. But, if so, how came it that Percy was to have an exeat as well? Two exeats could not have been granted on one and the same letter. Ah! he saw it all, now. Percy had that afternoon handed to St. George a letter directed to himself, and Mr. Todd, to make assurance doubly sure, had sent a second direct to their tutor. Both had been dated from Chudlegh; and, as there were but two Chudlegh boys in the house, St. George in his haste had thought that one of these letters related to him. What a piece of good fortune it was! But ought he to

condone the mistake, or return to the library and explain the error? Then came to his assistance that code of morality before mentioned, which rules that anything is permissible as against a master.

"Condone it!" he cried in high glee; "I should just think not! I should be a jolly fool if I did. It's his mistake, not mine; he can't blame me."

Mr. St. George did not find out his error; and the next afternoon Martin was hurrying to the station with the rest—bent upon enjoying to the utmost his unhoped-for liberty. At Kirkford, the county town, and eight miles distant from Chudlegh, they found Percy's trap, and rolled merrily along until they reached the village. There Martin left it, and wended his way on foot up the steep hill which led to the Hall. What a lark it was! And how surprised the servants would be when he rang the bell. As he approached the house,

he noticed that there were no lights in the windows, for by that time it was eleven o'clock, and no doubt the people had gone to bed. He gave a violent pull at the bell, then another and another—until the empty passages reverberated with the sound. At last he heard a step in the uncarpeted hall, and saw a faint light glimmer through the keyhole. The bolts were carefully withdrawn and the door was slightly opened. Then, half-hidden behind the door, he saw the footman—the tails of his shirt flapping against his bare legs—a guttering candle in one hand and a drawn sword in the other. He shrieked with laughter at so quaint an apparition.

"Hallo, Joseph!" he cried. "Do you think that thieves would ring the bell like that? It's I—Martin."

"The lud have mercy on us! Master Martin; an' at this time o' night! Why, bless us, where on earth do you come from?"

"Certainly from on earth, Joe, and not from Hades. Let us in, man, and I'll tell you all about it."

Joseph unfastened the chain, and Martin rushed into the hall.

"I say, Joe," he exclaimed, as the man was closing the door; "I shouldn't think you felt over-warm."

"Not particklarly," responded Joseph, shivering in the cool air.

"Well, run and get me something to eat, there's a good fellow! I'm as hungry as a bear."

Joseph donned a pair of trousers for decency's sake before proceeding to rouse the housekeeper; who, when she appeared, also in *deshabille*, stirred the kitchen fire and prepared to minister to Martin's necessities; whilst the latter stood by and explained the reasons for his sudden appearance.

The following morning, Martin did not

awake very early. It had been almost two o'clock before he retired; and, when he did awake, he felt heavy and drowsy—not merely from his short sleep, but as if on the verge of some illness. Possibly, the excitement which he had undergone the previous day, the beer which he had taken with Percy when at Kirkford, followed by a cold eight-miles drive, and the warm supper administered by the housekeeper had tended to his indisposition. In any case, he did not feel as though he were about to enjoy this stolen holiday so much as he had anticipated. Notwithstanding, after breakfast, he mounted Negro, and rode over to the Chase.

"You, Martin!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardyng, as he entered the parlour. "What can have brought you to Chudlegh, when your father and mother are still on the Continent?"

Then Martin had to recount the story of his escapade, whilst Mrs. Hardyng listened, and laughed until the tears ran down her face.

"You are a bad boy—a very bad boy," she said. "You ought at once to have told Mr. St. George of his mistake."

"I don't see that," retorted Martin, unabashed. "It won't do him any harm; and it's done me a lot of good."

"And Percy?"

"Percy is all right. He came back with me, yesterday. Of course, I shouldn't be here at all, if Percy must have suffered."

"I am glad that you are not without some idea of the difference between *meum* and *tuum*. But what have you done with Arthur?"

"Arthur remained at Sagitta Hill. He's not at St. George's, you know, but at the doctor's; and my coming couldn't make a bit of difference to him. Then he's a

'monitor,' and I took good care not to let him get wind of the thing, or his ideas of duty might have prevented my getting away."

"Is Agnes quite well?" he inquired, after a pause, and half-shyly.

"Quite. But it is school-time now, and she is busy at her lessons."

"Oh, Mrs. Hardyng," cried Martin eagerly; "you *must* let her have a half-holiday this afternoon!"

Mrs. Hardyng smiled. Agnes would not be able, she thought, to pay much attention to lessons, knowing that Martin was on the spot.

But he did not see the girl until luncheon, when she followed Mademoiselle into the room, demure and staid, quite different to the holiday-time Agnes whom he had pictured in his dreams. They greeted one another shyly — Agnes more than half-ashamed to betray her feelings before Made-

moiselle; Martin weighted by an unwonted bashfulness. But after the lapse of a few minutes they began to exchange glances, and to wish that they could steal out of the room and together wander beneath the willows.

Martin made a poor luncheon. Not that he was surfeited with love, but the indisposition which he had felt on waking had increased as the day advanced.

"You seem anything but well," said Mrs. Hardyng at last. "You have no appetite."

Martin confessed that he was not quite the thing, but did not think that there was anything serious the matter.

"Nevertheless, I shall send Parker for the doctor. Your mother is from home, and I could not think of letting you return to school without advice."

"But, please, Mrs. Hardyng, I must go back on Monday!"

"Nonsense! Let us hear what the doctor has to say about it."

The doctor came, and examined the boy's pulse; shook his head, and declared that the patient had caught a chill; prescribed, and said that it would be impossible for him to return on Monday; thought that a few days' rest was imperative, and signed a certificate to that effect. He would call again, he added, in a couple of days, and should then be able to give a more definite opinion.

Mrs. Hardyng enclosed the certificate in a letter to Mr. St. George, and sent a groom to the Hall for such articles as were indispensable to Martin's comfort. Before all things she was a woman of the world, and the accident which detained Martin at the Chase was far from causing her any serious uneasiness. No dangerous consequences were to be apprehended, and the attack itself appeared almost providentially determined

for the express purpose of throwing Agnes and Martin more closely together.

And Martin submitted obediently to his destiny. Until the doctor's next visit, he took a small quantity of physic, had his bed well warmed at night, and was treated to all the *petits soins* usually bestowed upon an invalid. It was all very pleasant and very satisfactory; and when, on the following Monday, the doctor permitted him to go out of doors, but at the same time recommended that for his thorough convalescence he should spend two or three more days in the quiet of the country, it was more delightful still. He could take a book when Blanche and Agnes were in the schoolroom and lie on a rug beneath the willows, watching the fish as they disported themselves in the stews; or building airy castles which might, or might not, become reality. And beneath the willows, after her work was done, Agnes would find

him; and, seated on one-half of the rug, would chat and whisper confidences as in the olden time.

One day, when she was so doing, Martin began to sing softly to himself—

> "Keep not standing fixed and rooted,
> Briskly venture, briskly roam;
> Head and hand, where'er thou foot it,
> And stout heart are still at home."

"What are you dreaming about, Martin?" she exclaimed suddenly, as if jealous that his thoughts should be straying over distant, and to her unattainable, pastures.

He did not immediately reply. He was too deeply buried in his "realm of pleasance."

"Martin!" she insisted. "How stupid you are. I shall go away, if you can't be more interesting."

"I was thinking, Aggie, of the time when I shall be a soldier. It seems so far away—so far, that sometimes I think it will never come."

"Mademoiselle," replied the girl, with a subdued sparkle in her eyes, "says that we ought never to be impatient."

"That's all very well for girls," he retorted hotly. "They've got no spirit. That is—I mean—very few of them are like you."

"By which, I suppose," she said maliciously, "you would imply, that I'm not like other girls — that I'm a tomboy, in fact."

"I didn't mean anything of the kind. But I say, Aggie! shan't you like to be a soldier's wife?"

"A soldier's wife?"

"Well, when we are married, of course you will be!"

"When we are married! And who says that we are going to be married?" she exclaimed, tossing her small head defiantly.

"I do. And then you *know* we are, don't you, dear?"

"I know nothing at all about it," persisted the girl half angrily, yet blushing prettily.

"But I do," he said doggedly. "I say, Aggie," he went on, after a pause, during which he had been examining a little foot which peeped from out the skirt of her dress, "what makes you wear such high heels?"

"I suppose, because every one does," she replied, pouting, and withdrawing the foot from his too-searching gaze.

"Well, I shan't let you do it when we are married. It's a beastly fashion. Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, that old pagan, Xenophon, praised a husband for making his wife give up wearing high-heeled boots for the purpose of making herself look taller; and for ordering her not to colour her face with vermilion and white lead in a vain attempt to make herself look prettier than she really was.

And I say, Aggie, when we're married, you'll never paint, will you?"

But Martin had altogether exceeded his pre-marital rights; and the girl, springing from the rug, ran swiftly to the house.

Yet, for the most part, they got on well enough, these two; and their constant intercourse, during the happy week which Martin spent at the Chase, tended not a little to further Mrs. Hardyng's maternal schemes. Indeed, when the day came on which Martin must return to school, Agnes witnessed his departure with tearful eyes; and, as for the lad, he carried away a deeper impress of her young beauty than at any former period.

"I was thinking of the time when I shall be a soldier. It seems so far away—so far, that sometimes I think it will never come!" Thus had Martin spoken when he lay, stretched upon a rug, beneath the willows. And the words, like words sometimes are,

were to be prophetic. That saucy wench, Fortune, is apt to bestow her gifts one moment, but to take them back the next. She loves to delude her votaries, be they never so devout; and oftentimes her vagaries are so inexplicable that men, deserting her shrine exclaim, "Der Teufel! drat the jade! After all, she's no better than a queen!"

Then, too, results spring from the most unexpected sources; and little did the two brothers think, as they lay *perdu* with Linn amid the thick hazels, that the contemplative spirit of the elder was to bring to naught the bolder visions of the younger. But so it was to be.

Arthur had been a monitor at Sagitta Hill for about twelve months when, greatly to his father's delight, he gained a scholarship at Oxford. But, for some time before that, he had regarded his proposed sojourn in Camptown with an ever-increasing

distaste. He had always preferred the contemplative to the active—the secure bank to the tossing stream. And yet, in spite of a natural contemplativeness, he was unwilling to be a drone. He felt that he was at the disposition of an external force which compelled his will and rescued it from the world of shadows. He felt this force to be omnipotent, capable of dealing fierce blows, or of soothing the wearied one with softest touch; to be almighty, whether with regard to the dews of heaven, the raging sea, or the lambkin nestling against the mountain tussock; whose servant he was, and in whose service he was determined to be spent.

Animated by these feelings, two years at Camptown appeared as a waste of time; to be outside his work, and a misspent use of valuable opportunity. He appreciated the vast difference such a life must present to the one he pined for: how unsatisfying it

would be, and how badly he should fit it. His father, he knew, had no suspicion of the gradual change which had enthralled his soul. But he must be told, and that soon. And when could this be done better than now—after he had won a scholarship, and won it, too, with *éclat?*

So, one evening, after he had returned from Oxford, and was sitting with Mr. Ffrench in the dining-room, and when Mrs. Ffrench and Martin were strolling beneath the elms, he broached the subject.

"Governor!" he began, for the boys often so addressed their father, in a loving sort of way and as admitting his authority. "Now that I've won this scholarship and am likely to get on at Oxford, I've great thoughts about going into the Church."

Mr. Ffrench looked up suddenly—surprised at a declaration so unexpected.

"Bah!" he exclaimed petulantly.

"Indeed, governor, I've often thought

about the matter lately, and come to consider it my duty."

It was a novel and, at the same time, a most distasteful idea to the squire that this elder son, about whose future he had expended so much consideration, should take orders. According to him, the priestly office sat ill upon the shoulders of a landed proprietor. It seemed as a drag attached to future possibilities, and one for which in this case there was no occasion.

"What can have put such a thing into your head?" he exclaimed angrily. "It's not to be thought of for a moment."

"But listen, governor. God forbid that I should step into your shoes for long years to come. In the mean time, I can't be idle. I've come to hate the very idea of Camptown, and believe that I see the right course mapped out before me."

The squire felt that the matter was more serious than he had imagined.

"Look here, my boy! There is a strong feeling growing up in the minds of most lords-lieutenant against placing parsons on the commission. Were you to be ordained, you would most probably never become a magistrate."

"That would not weigh with me one iota, governor."

"Then, as a parson, you could not possibly wear a deputy-lieutenant's uniform. Such a thing would be incongruous—quite incongruous," he repeated warmly.

"As to that, governor, I never wanted to don a red coat, with gold lace, and therefore scarlet and silver would offer no greater attractions."

"Pshaw!" interrupted the squire; "you're a greater fool than I took you to be. But seriously, Arthur; let us look at the matter in all its bearings. As a parson, you would be debarred from many things. You must give up all hope of getting into

parliament. A parson in parliament is quite out of place—in the House of Commons, I mean, and except he be a bishop," added Mr. Ffrench, as a saving clause.

"I assure you, father, that I've no ambition to enter the political arena. To do so would be altogether foreign to my nature. And really, governor, I have thought over the future most seriously. I feel convinced that, as a clergyman, I shall find greater happiness myself, and shall possibly be found more useful than in any other station."

The squire was at his wits'-end. It seemed impossible to make any impression upon a young man who appeared so *entêté*, and to have got his lesson so well by heart. He could but temporize and trust that Arthur's craze, as he considered it to be, would become weakened in the course of time, and eventually expire.

"Well, well, my boy," he exclaimed,

attempting to drown his ruffled temper in one last glass of port; "well, well! There's oceans of time yet before the matter need be decided. We'll see—we'll see!"

Nor could Arthur make any further impression, at least for the moment. The squire was in fact greatly disturbed; and, when he retired to rest that night, poured this new trouble, which had so unexpectedly arisen, into the loving ears of Mrs. Ffrench. But he did not derive the satisfaction from his confidence which he expected. The majority of women have ever been staunch supporters of the church militant and formed one of its strongest outworks. In this instance the mother sided with the son, expressed her admiration at his intended conduct, and put it to Ichabod whether he could conscientiously attempt to thwart an action so commendable.

"We'll see—we'll see!" he murmured once more, driven by his spouse into a

storm-tossed sea from out the very haven in which he had trusted to find repose.

"We'll see—we'll see," he murmured day after day; until at last he became weary of the words, repeated them no more, and permitted Arthur to follow his bent, unchecked, if not unheeded.

But as the impossibility of restraining his elder son's choice occurred more forcibly to his mind, so did another difficulty present itself with ever increasing pertinacity. That thirty thousand pounds which was to form Martin's heritage—who was to care for it? How was it to be rescued from the grasp which held it so persistently? True, the interest was duly paid each quarter-day, but the principal was locked up, out of reach, and every year appeared less likely to be repaid. No doubt he could have demanded it—have insisted upon its repayment, at whatever cost; but this he was loth to do—loth to call the old house

so strictly to account. He would first try less violent measures and see the effect which they might have. But for that, it was absolutely necessary that he should be personally represented in the firm; and if Arthur could not be induced to undertake the matter—why, it must devolve on Martin. After all, was not Martin more interested in the recovery of this money than Arthur? No doubt he was. And Mr. Ffrench began to take a certain pride in the shrewdness which had enabled him to find a road so simple out of the chaos in which he had become involved.

Thus it happened that one day, after Arthur had left for Oxford, and when Mr. and Mrs. Ffrench, with Martin, were sitting in the twilight upon the terrace, a good opportunity presented itself for setting the matter at rest, and that for ever. Like most weak men, the squire could at times be peremptory. To be peremptory was an

easy method of surmounting any difficulty which appeared insuperable when subjected to the objectionable but clear light of justice and logic. To be peremptory relieved his somewhat lethargic brain of farther trouble; so that at times, and when desirable, he came by the sheer force of iteration to consider such peremptoriness as being in all essentials the similitude of justice.

Martin, then, was sitting at his mother's side, dreaming and singing softly to himself--

> "In what land the sun does visit
> Brisk are we, whate'er betide:
> To give space for wandering is it
> That the world was made so wide."

As he sung, Mrs. Ffrench laid a hand upon his head, and looked down kindly at his abstracted face.

"What's the lad muttering about now, Mary, eh? It's about time that he had done with dreams, and began to think about the future."

"So I was, father," exclaimed Martin,

his face flushed and eager. "I was thinking that I should soon be able to go into the army! And I say, father! I may go into the cavalry, mayn't I?"

"Pshaw!" cried the squire pettishly. "I thought that you had put such nonsense out of your head. The army was all very well so long as Arthur was going to Camptown; but, now that he has fixed his mind upon the Church, you'll have to take his place in the business."

"But, Ichabod, dear!" remonstrated his wife.

"There's no good to be done, Mary, by talking about it," retorted the squire, rising from his chair and tossing the remains of his cigar viciously over the balustrade. "I can't afford to put one son into the Church and another into the army. Arthur has chosen for himself, and Martin will have to work for a living;" having said which he walked determinedly away.

Both mother and son remained for some time absorbed in their reflections—the mother's hand resting on the boy's head, and he with his face pressed tightly against her shoulder. Fortunate it was for Martin that Mrs. Ffrench had not sought to rule her children by fear, but had striven to win their confidence; that she had been not only their parent but friend; that she had endeavoured to instil charity, and to create in them a reverence towards their elders. Whilst, side by side with these, she had permitted a healthy latitude to their thoughts, and trusted more to the influence of good example than to severer precepts. So now, when Martin, impelled by his distress to find a comforter, laid his burning head upon her shoulder, he knew right well that he could find no comforter so true, so gentle as herself.

"Mother!" he murmured; "do you think father meant what he said? Do you

think that he won't let me go into the army, after all?"

"I am afraid not, dear. He seemed very determined."

"But it seems so hard, mother; he never spoke like that before. And I've always thought that he meant me to be a soldier!"

Mrs. Ffrench pressed the boy's head yet closer to her breast before she said, softly—

"We must all have trials, Martin; and trials are never pleasant. But remember, dear, that 'many a scene that looks desert and rock-bound from the distance, will unfold itself, when visited, into rare valleys;' valleys which have their running streams and fragrant meadows, and which are carpeted with the fairest flowers. Probably, were you to go into the army against your father's wish, you would find but the rock-bound, sterile desert; whilst, by doing his will, you may find the running stream, and

fragrant meadow, and the fairest of fair flowers. Try to think so, dear, and to be obedient. To be that is, after all, the one duty of a soldier."

But in the first hour of his disappointment such words fell upon Martin's ear as vain, unprofitable sounds, and his soul refused their comfort.

Mr. Ffrench did not relent; and in this instance his wife found any attempt to shake his determination to be worse than useless. It but made him the more peremptory. When Arthur's future had to be decided, it was an altogether different matter. His elder son would be of age before he could be ordained; whilst Martin's commission must be purchased when the lad was still a minor. Then, it was one thing persistently to oppose a strong yearning after the Church, and another to nip in the bud an equally strong inclination for the army. In the former case the world

would be sure to cry, "*Proh pudor!*"—in the latter, to support, however coldly, parental rights.

Mrs. Ffrench, then, could give Martin no other comfort than that already given; and the boy wandered for long days in the oak woods, alone, and impatient of even Linn's society, chewing the cud of his disappointment, and fancying himself to be the most ill-used of mankind. He had been treated with hard measure, but even so it was better that his vexation should have free vent. Hour after hour, then, he roamed the woods; for his father had presented the sour grape, and his teeth were set on edge.

But when boys have been well brought up, however severe the present pain, "there is always a something left which cannot be churned up, like the butter-milk which cannot be turned into butter; and this something determines whether you are

to be on this side or that." In Martin's case, this something at last determined him to enlist on the side of duty, and, however grudgingly, to obey.

"But, ah!" he exclaimed from time to time, and with an insistence that it was impossible to control, "what will Agnes say? Will she love me as much, now that I am going into business, as when she thought that I was to enter the army?"

To which anxious question he could but reply, with all the fatalism of a Moslem—

"Behold! whatever will be, will be. The future is hidden on the far side of an impenetrable darkness. But Allah—the ever-living, the ever-subsisting—is good. The faithful have no cause for fear; the patient shall never want! Allah, the all-beautiful—the all-glorious! Allah be praised!"

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

ONE MORE SISYPHUS.

Four years had passed since Martin had left Sagitta Hill, and he was now at Camptown. Two years out of the four he had spent on the Continent, striving to graft upon his previous attainments some knowledge of German, French, and Italian. His father considered such a training to present greater advantages than those to be gleaned at a university. A residence abroad, he said, would open the young fellow's mind, and prevent it from gravitating towards the narrow channels of sectarianism, or from treading in his brother's footsteps. His fears, perhaps, were groundless; for Martin

was a most unlikely man to adopt the Church as a profession; nor, on the other hand, was it probable that he would be led captive by the fascinating speculations of heterodoxy and scepticism.

Martin, then, was now at Camptown; and the afternoon was supremely, nay, irritatingly warm. An already declining sun glared through the faded venetian blinds, shooting its hot rays at the low ceiling, whence they were deflected upon the desks, the floor, and tall stools of a grimy office. It illuminated with unaccustomed brilliancy the dirty paper on the walls, rendered more patent the thick coating of dust which had accumulated on a few half-empty shelves and the books that were heaped upon them. It displayed in all their delicate tracery the cobwebs which most times hung secreted in the usually so dark corners. It caused the atmosphere of the place to be stifling, unendurable; and

made the workers, who were subjected to its influence, to breathe a prayer for the lagging hours to glide more rapidly.

The office formed part of an old warehouse which belonged to a firm whose remote antiquity had cast its threadbare mantle on all around it. A double desk with sloping top stretched from the long, low window more than halfway across the floor; a round, discarded dining-table with oilcloth cover stood between the desk and a time-worn sideboard placed against the further wall. A large safe—the one piece of modern furniture upon which the eye could rest—vivid with green paint and handles of shining brass, stood on blocks of wood between the sideboard and a corkscrew stair which led to the lower office; and, dotted about in odd corners, were rickety, rush-bottomed chairs, evidently for many years and since their youth associated with the sideboard and

round old table. A few smoke-discoloured maps, ancient and out of date, hung upon the walls; whilst opposite the safe, but behind the desk, a row of cupboards, reaching from floor to ceiling, occupied a full side of this, at most times, gloomy workshop.

The paint on the cupboards was dimmed; the keys turned in their locks unwillingly; the hinges of the doors were rusty and moved on their centre with rasping cries; their shelves were laden with old pattern books, with piles of letters—docketed and separated by red tape into neat bundles; or contained wormeaten boxes, filled to the brim with musty documents—once possibly of value, but now obsolete and dating well back into the previous century. Ah, what a history could those cupboards unfold! What successes — what failures! What stories about hearts now elated with hope, now cast down with despair! A

history, too, of long toil, of racked brains, of bold ventures into then almost unknown and distant lands. Pile upon pile of instructions were there, addressed to supercargoes, bidding them to cruise along the Spanish main and sell what merchandize they could at a premium of forty to fifty per cent; letters from Lisbon—dated during those years in which Napoleon's marshals were being driven back over the Pyrenees—telling of what commissariat paper had been bought, and at how large a discount; letters, too, from Heligoland, trusting that war might continue, and detailing the huge profits which had been extracted from smugglers who were engaged in running their purchases through Boney's outposts on the mainland. And side by side with these, and even of older date, were accounts anent the stabling of the many packhorses which had carried merchandize into neighbouring Moorshire; and complaints

about the irritating delay of letters which had taken six or seven days to reach their destination, owing to deep snowdrifts on the road. In short, those dark cupboards held in their recesses the wherewithal to construct a history of the hoary past—deeply interesting, but well-nigh forgotten—which could tell of times never to return, of hands whose sun of work had set, of men gone to their rest.

But, basta! It is an age when most people find history but dry reading; when other subjects usurp their thoughts; when pleasure-seeking and the race for wealth occupy each spare moment; when the present alone is tolerated, and the past and future are alike unheeded; when real friendships are few and far between, and a host of acquaintances appear one moment to disappear the next, as do the fragments of gaudily coloured glass when shaken in the kaleidoscope; self alone being permanent—

the fixed star round which all other things rotate.

Martin was sitting on a high stool at one side of the sloping desk, and facing him was a young man, his fellow-worker, and chief clerk to the firm. The latter was four or five years older than Martin; a fair, square-shouldered, well-made lad; intent, notwithstanding the heat, upon his task, and, to all appearance, giving his whole attention to the documents which lay thickly massed in heaps on his either hand. His forehead was broad, if a trifle low; his lips thin and jaw thick-set. When from time to time he raised his head, and smilingly regarded Martin listlessly turning over the pages of a ledger, his eyes appeared blue, yet earnest—eyes which would have given confidence to most people and marked their owner as one who could be trusted. After a second inspection they might be thought a shade too light, a trifle

too unresponsive, the least bit cat-like. But the next moment the character-reader, if strictly honest, would have considered such conclusions to be unjust, and have returned to his first impressions. Nor would he have been altogether wrong. Joseph Fleming had built up a good reputation for himself both as a boy at school and now, when for six years he had worked in his present situation. To him work was always work, a fact not to be trifled with nor explained away. To him it made no difference whether he were confined within the narrow limits of a grammar-school, or relegated to the more extended arena in which he was engaged.

The firm of Nesbitt, Ffrench, and Co. was both widely connected and did a large business. It possessed establishments across the seas, and numerous correspondents across the English Channel. It had managerships and other well-salaried appointments at its

disposal, in sufficient numbers to sustain the energies of a far less ambitious man than Fleming, and to incite faithful service. Nay, it possessed one even greater advantage than any of the above. Its members were limited to old Mr. Nesbitt, who worked in an office at the foot of the corkscrew stairs, and to Martin, who had been admitted a partner but three months before. Mr. Nesbitt was a bachelor and childless. Were he to die, who knew the ins and outs of the business so well as Fleming, or whom in that case could Martin take into partnership with a better prospect of success? So the chief clerk, albeit disappointed that he had not been made a partner at the same time as Martin, apparently tried to do his best; and in proportion as he tried so did he apparently succeed.

Fleming had been educated at the Free Grammar-school of the town — a school

founded above three centuries ago by Hugh Oldham, once bishop of Exeter, with the intent of "the bringing up of children in their adolescence, and to occupy them in good learning therein, when they come to age and virility, whereby they may better know, love, honour, and dread God and His laws." Whilst there, he had received a classical education free of expense, but quaintly enough—so greatly have necessities changed since the days of Bishop Oldham—his father had to pay for his instruction in writing and arithmetic. And as, even in the bishop's time, the children about Camptown had "pregnant wits," although "mostly brought up rudely and idly, and not in virtue, cunning, education, literature, and in good manners," so in his turn Joseph Fleming did not shame his native place, but, whilst at the school, sharpened his wit and benefited by the good bishop's wise forethought.

Fleming could not be deemed a gentleman in the usual acceptation of the term; that is, he possessed but few of those qualifications commonly attaching to the word. He was of the people, if honest; his clothes had a provincial cut, if decent; his manner was respectful rather than gentle, and naturally brusque rather than deliberately vapid. Although industry constituted his only capital, and he was somewhat uncouth as to his outward man, he possessed a deep ambition which led him not only towards the accumulation of wealth but to the attainment of a better footing on the social ladder. He was actuated, and that at all times, by an innate confidence in his abilities, and, combined with this, by a considerable regard for self. And perhaps it was owing to the latter circumstance that his eyes appeared, on occasion, a thought too unresponsive.

Martin, then, sat opposite to Fleming,

pretending to be occupied with the big ledger. But the task was evidently far from a congenial one, and his thoughts far from steadfast. His gaze would repeatedly turn towards the venetian blinds as though he pined after the bright sunlight which streamed on their farther side, and as if eager to satisfy an inward craving for more distant objects than those upon the desk. Now and again, he would heave a deep sigh and endeavour to compel his attention to the work in hand. After one such sigh, deeper and more prolonged than any which had gone before, he took up a couple of letters which lay beside the ledger and read them for the third or fourth time that afternoon. Both were invitations, and both were in a lady's handwriting. The first was couched in the frank, easy style which invites confidence for confidence, and which in this case was no doubt intended to scatter formality to the winds. The second

was in the cold, respectable phraseology of the day, and left a doubt as to whether it were a free-will offering, or simply a tithe deposited upon the altar of fashion.

"17, York Place, Albert Road.

"DEAR MR. FFRENCH,

"Mamma has deputed me to write and ask whether you can possibly dine with us on Tuesday next at seven o'clock. We shall be *so* pleased if you can do so, and join an almost family circle. Dear mamma, I am sorry to say, is suffering from one of her bad headaches, and it is *so* sad to see her on the sofa, incapable of movement.

"Believe me, dear Mr. Ffrench,

"Yours very truly,

"FANNY CLAYDON-PIGOTT."

Then, the other:—

"Mr. and Miss Grierson present their compliments to Mr. Ffrench, and request

the pleasure of his company at dinner on Friday, the 17th inst., at seven o'clock.

"Barton Hall, Wednesday, July 2."

Martin, having re-read both the above for the fifth time, pushed the ledger impatiently to one side.

"I can't find anything wrong in the additions," he exclaimed crossly. "They seem as right as a trivet, so far as I have gone."

"I don't think that's very far," said Fleming quietly.

"Perhaps not. But who can work on such a broiling afternoon as this?—except it be a fellow like you, Fleming," he added, "who can stick at a desk, blow the wind hot or cold."

"Never mind, Mr. Martin. You have not been used to this kind of work so long as I have. I'll stop an hour later, and run over the totals myself."

"You're a jolly good sort, Fleming! I will say that for you. But, I say, doesn't

it seem absurd to be bothering for three days over one confounded threepence? I wish Nesbitt had got to find the thing out himself."

"The error must be found, or the books won't balance, Mr. Martin."

"I know that. But a paltry threepenny-bit! If it were a good round sum, now—one that would make an appreciable difference—I could work doubly as hard."

Fleming smiled at the other's warmth.

"You see, Mr. Martin, an error of threepence is as serious as one of a thousand pounds. So long as the books do not balance, one can never tell what mistake may turn up."

"But," ejaculated Martin, "that doesn't make hunting all day after a mealy threepence any less hard! I'll give it up altogether, sooner than spend three more days like the three last."

Fleming laughed softly—to himself.

"You remind me, Mr. Martin," he said, "of a clerk in Thornton's house—you know Thornton's — who, when they had been searching for a couple of weeks after an error of two and six in the balance-sheet, entered the senior's office and tendered him half a crown.

"'What's this for?' said the senior.

"'Well, sir, I'd rather pay the money out of my own pocket than be slaving to find it in the books for another two weeks.'"

"What a fool of a fellow!" exclaimed Martin, with a laugh. "But I say, Fleming! I wish that you'd cast an eye over the book, yourself, and see whether you can make anything out of it. Meantime, I'll scribble a couple of notes that ought to go by to-night's post."

Martin had barely finished the notes when there came a tap at the door, and a pale-faced man, who would seem to have passed more than half his life in the warm,

close atmosphere of a cotton mill, thrust the forepart of his body into the room.

"Please, sir," he said, "the girls want to know if they can clean the office this afternoon?"

"Hurrah!" cried Martin. "I had forgotten all about washing-day. Let them come by all means, Patrick; and tell them to make haste. And I say, Fleming; put my books and papers in the safe—there's a good fellow!"

Upon which, Martin hurried to a wash-stand, and, after drying his hands on a not over-clean towel, exchanged his office coat for one more respectable and sightly. He was doing so, when a second figure appeared in the doorway.

"Hallo, Globe-trotter!" he exclaimed. "Is that you?"

"It's my ain sel'."

"And what may your ain sel' be wanting?"

"Wanting to know whether you're inclined for a walk this afternoon. It's hot, and fine, and droughty; just the day for a man to get a Turkish bath without spending hard-gotten siller."

"Wait a second, then, and I'm your man. You've come at a lucky time, too, for the girls are about to wash down the office."

"Wash down the office, and at this time o' day! And the clock barely gone three! Why, man, it's a tempting of Providence."

"A tempting of Providence!" exclaimed Martin, laughing.

"Aiblins, a waste of the precious moments; an extravagance of time that will bear nae good fruit."

"We're an old firm you see, Globe-trotter, and can't forget the day when time wasn't so valuable. But I'll tell you what, old fellow; you would be glad enough to have the place washed down once a

week, had you to sit sweltering in it the livelong day."

"And the clock barely gone three!" murmured the other. "I call it naething less than a squandering o' good gifts."

Martin cut short any further soliloquy by pushing his friend through the doorway, down the stairs, and into the street.

Andrew Macpherson was the Globe-trotter's real name; and the place of his birth a secluded valley in the Highlands, the exact whereabouts of which, if he had not forgotten, he had never been known to disclose. But he was fond of alluding to the boldness with which he had left it, when a mere boy, to seek his fortune in the wide and, to him, unknown world; and he would spin long yarns concerning his many adventures by flood and field; and incite young men to dare what he had done. On the other side of the globe he had commenced life as a shepherd; had worked his

way to the position of manager on a sheep-run; and, having scraped together sufficient money on which to live for the remainder of his days, had wandered over diverse countries until, in process of time, he found himself at Camptown—sheltering his head beneath the same roof as Martin.

He was a fairly tall, well-knit man; with grey hair and ruddy, weather-beaten complexion; with kindly eye, and broad forehead; a mouth that seldom broke into a smile, but was at all times pleasant and genial. A well-informed man for his station, and liberal in his ideas. One who had viewed life in its strangest aspects; who had come thoroughly to comprehend, so far as mortal can, the inexorable laws which rule the human race; who had worshipped his Creator amid raging seas, on arid, sun-struck plains, and in the snow-capped fastnesses of lofty mountains; who had bowed his head right humbly, recog-

izing the inability of temples made with hands to supply all needs, in all places, and on all occasions; and who had learned to exalt above the most costly stone-built fane the great temple of the Universe—that most beautiful of all temples, whose pavement is the earth, whose roof the sun-, moon-, star-lighted canopy on high.

He was a true globe-trotter, this Andrew Macpherson; and not only that, but a good specimen of his class. The one fault in his character, perhaps, consisted in a tendency to regard the usages of society with a certain disgust; to pick out therefrom all that is frivolous and idle, to be oblivious to what is good and necessary. And such a tendency was but natural to a man who had been developed under conditions similar to his. The indulgent and selfish ethics ever concomitant with an overwrought civilization were altogether opposed to the simpler habits of the people amidst whom

he had spent the greater portion of his life. In the colonies he had mixed with those who laboured under a, at most times, blue expanse of sky; who were scarcely, if at all, enervated by luxury, and were, as a rule, primitive in their ways; whose ideas, so far as they went, were comprehensive and fraternal, nor as yet disturbed by an over-refining spirit or hampering greed. No wonder then, that, with such bygones to fall back upon, the customs of the old world, and of its big cities, were not in every sense agreeable to his instincts; that he descried the threadbare places in their outer garments, and in some measure overlooked the great, strong heart which pulsates beneath their surface.

When Martin and the Globe-trotter had quitted the dreary-looking warehouse in Fosset Lane, they traversed several narrow streets before crossing the inky river which separates Camptown from suburban Cow-

ford. That once passed, they continued to thread other streets, gloomy and dirt-stricken as the former, but straighter and broader; and which, from the newer appearance of the pavement and from the gaps which opened now and again between the houses, evidently tended towards a more countrified and less densely peopled quarter. Martin often went home that way. It was less noisy and more direct than either of the main thoroughfares which lay at a little distance, on either hand. When he did so, his elbows were not so often jostled by an unceasing stream of passengers; he thought that the air was purer, although that must have been a fancy; but, at all events, he was more alone, and could better dream of Agnes and his former life at Chudlegh.

As they proceeded, the houses came at wider intervals; even a soot-discoloured sward and moribund hedges occurred here

and there; and the pavement of the town was exchanged for the cinder-covered, dusty path of a, at one time, country lane.

"My word! 'tis some hot, as folks say in these parts," exclaimed Macpherson, raising his hat and wiping the perspiration from his brow. "I'd pay down something handsome if I could be under an honest, Waimate County sun for the next few hours."

Martin regarded him slyly. "In any case, Globe-trotter," he said, "it's a safe offer; one that will not readily be taken up."

"Aye, more's the pity," returned Macpherson. "I don't suppose, now, that if a man went about with a test-paper in his hat he'd find a trace of ozone—no, not if he were to walk for three weeks."

"I don't suppose he would," sighed Martin.

"It's on account of the tarnation chimneys, which give out carbonic acid

by day, whilst the gas and dratted trees give it out by night. There'll be no oxygen left, I'm thinking, what wi' lungs and what wi' furnaces."

Martin was unable to refute the proposition: it was too much in accord with his own views.

"I'll tell you what it is, lad. People in these diggings dinna know what life is. They hunt after wealth and seldom catch their game. They lose health and find an early grave. Their children grow up pale-faced, stunted, sickly; their women have nae mair stamina than the worth of a bodle; and they go on year after year—plodding, toiling, struggling—without a thought of improving their condition."

"What else can they do?" exclaimed Martin. "What other life are they fitted to attempt?"

"What else can they do?" cried the Globe-trotter. "Let them emigrate.

There's land enough, there's work enough, an' there's blue sky enough, across the seas, for all the people 'twixt the English Channel and the Tweed; an', for the matter o' that, for every soul atween John o' Groats and the Land's End. This country is about played out, laddie. It's clover sick, an' been called upon to bear too many white crops."

"Why on earth, then, did you not stop in Waimate County?" exclaimed Martin, indignant that the mother-country should be thus disparaged."

"So I should ha' done, lad, if it hadna been for circumstances. I worked there lang years and lang hours, until I'd got my pile together and thought as I'd earned a rest. And Waimate County, or, for the matter o' that, a score or so of Waimate Counties, isna the place for a loafer. There's whiskey; there's horse-racing; there's all sorts o' games. A man does

but little good on the other side unless he's a worker, an' sticks to his work. Sae, I took a run home."

"Are there foxes in Waimate County?" inquired Martin.

"Foxes, lad! They've plagues enough without foxes. There's rabbits, and storms, and droughts, and rains, and a heap o' things, without adding they beasties to the list."

"Ah, well! I don't think much of your Waimate," retorted Martin. "I'd sooner break stones in England than migrate to such a place."

Macpherson patted his companion gently on the back, whilst he replied good-humouredly—

"Dinna get fashed wi' yer porridge, lad, afore it's burnt yer mouth. Ye canna tell what may happen. Many a one, every bit as good as yersel', has been forced to earn his bread in foreign parts."

"But, Globe-trotter! I shouldn't like to leave my people."

"There's something in that, laddie. Yet, after all, it's nae mair than a sentiment wi' most men. It's a kind o' salve as they gi'e to their consciences. Friends ne'er stand i' the way of an appointment in India, which is like to occupy the best years of a life. Nae, lad, nae. It's hard work they mostly shy at. It's the uniform, an' spangles, an' glitter that 'tices 'em one way; an' the roughish jobs they'd have to do as deters 'em from the other. Most on 'em want to begin at the top o' the tree, and few care to tackle the lower boughs. After all," he continued presently, "it's but human nature. It's what might be expected frae the road they've been brought up;—all things ready to the hand, and ne'er a thought beyond the present."

"In spite of that, Globe-trotter, I shall never be a colonist."

"I dinna suppose you will, lad. Though you are ane of the right sort, too," he added kindly. "But, after all, you're but a new chum. An' I take it that, go where you will or remain where you will, do what you like or leave undone what you like, trouble will come alang afore you want it."

They had left the cinder-covered path far behind, and for the last twenty minutes had been passing between fields, girdled with hedgerows and studded with the gardens and houses of richer folk. They were still within the limits of the borough, but presently they crossed an almost unnoticeable stream and stood straightway upon county soil. Ever since he had been at Camptown, Martin had found pleasure in the thought that he was not altogether a townsman; that, wherever his work might be by day, he slept in the country—free from the jurisdiction of mayor, corporation, and city justices—and in an English county,

ruled by its Lord-Lieutenant and magistrates in quarter sessions assembled. Not that this made any appreciable difference in his daily life; but he felt happier in consequence, and more as though he were at Chudlegh.

Soon after they had crossed the brook they arrived at their lodgings. These formed the greater portion of a two-storied corner house—one of a short row and abutting on a cindered road. A little distance beyond the house, the road, which was an offshoot of the highway running from Camptown, stopped short at an old quickset fence, making it a no-thoroughfare and quiet.

Martin had been fortunate in his selection. At least his apartments were clean, comfortably furnished, and airy. The Globe-trotter had the front room, but that did not much matter, as, the house being a corner one, Martin's sitting-room, which was at the side, looked across a small garden on to a large, open piece of ground beyond. The view

was not so beautiful as that to be seen from the terrace at Chudlegh, but, on the other hand, the sitting-room was his own—so long, that is, as the landlady and himself were on speaking terms.

Needless to say, this landlady was a widow and of fallen fortunes. And what man, who has been blessed with a landlady so situated, but knows how impossible it must have been for the Widow Toler entirely to conceal her misfortunes within her own chaste breast. In Mrs. Toler's case, such was the tenacity of early habit and so vivid the reminiscence of departed grandeur, that she was apt to forget that she took in lodgers, and that their rooms for the time being were not exclusively her own. Of an evening, and possibly during the day, when Martin was absent, she sat in his easy-chair, warmed her feet at the fire which he must pay for, and read her novel beneath the chandelier whose consumption of gas would

be noted in his weekly bill. He would thus find her when he returned at night—one fair hand supporting a well-formed head, an elbow resting on the table, and a shapely forearm exposed to his full gaze. It was no doubt a pretty sight. But at such times Martin would have preferred his easy-chair to the pleasure of her society. She would linger, too, and talk; refer to a past in which she had kept her carriage, and to the balls at which she used to dance with Viscount Murdock,—the grand seignior who had cast a halo about her youthful days.

Martin was all the more vexed in that she never so appropriated the Globe-trotter's apartment. A kind of freemasonry seemed to exist in the latter case which prevented her from taking so great a liberty. He had spoken on the subject to Macpherson, who had recommended him to kick her out of the room. Possibly he was too young to do that; or felt a lurking pity for one who

had fallen so low, yet had kept her carriage. Then she had been the frequent partner of Viscount Murdock; and who was Martin, that he should be hard upon a woman by whom his lordship had been so ostensibly attracted? Ah, well! he must not be blamed too severely. He was little more than a boy—one of the world's new chums, as the Globe-trotter had christened him.

CHAPTER II.

CHEZ MRS. CLAYDON-PIGOTT.

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott lived at York Place, Albert Road, in company with her husband, Mr. Claydon-Pigott, and with her daughters —Henrietta, Fanny, and Esther.

Esther was about twelve, still in short frocks, and a young lady who at times could be most demonstratively objectionable. She was gifted with an occult method of worming out those family secrets about which it was highly desirable that she should be kept in ignorance. She had a knack of blurting out such self-acquired knowledge at the most inconvenient season; and constantly inflicted her presence upon

Henrietta and Fanny when they would greatly have preferred her absence. The long curls which floated down her back were seldom unruffled; her dresses, oftener than not, were minus a button; and her manners were abrupt, not to say hoydenish.

Fanny, who, at her mother's instigation, had written the friendly invitation to Martin Ffrench, had "come out" during the previous winter. She was a broad-shouldered and fleshful girl, with thick waist, and plump, fair cheeks; of medium height and robust proportions. She was fond of sitting in odd corners where she could enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with some appreciative male, and preferred such *tête-à-tête* to dazzling the many beneath the glare of a central chandelier. So fond was she of odd corners that, although she had but attained the middle of her fourth lustrum, she was already the victim of numerous

and futile attachments. And these so rapidly succeeded each other, that love might be said to form a necessary condition of her existence. At present, notwithstanding that at her mother's command she had indited so gushing an epistle to Martin, she was under the influence of a passion perhaps more hopelessly incapable of fulfilment than any which had preceded it. For some weeks, her tenderness had found an object in the person of Ernest Clegg—an artist, and probably the most impecunious of his order. But impecuniosity carried no weight with Fanny. He loved—she loved—they both loved. However light Ernest's purse, they could exchange stolen glances, press each other's hand in quiet corners, and revel in blissful dreams. And this was the more delightful in that it was surreptitious, unsuspected by Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, and therefore romantic in its every aspect. Fanny believed that

she could die for Ernest—certainly that she could wait for him long years—and, all former experiences notwithstanding, that she could never love again. And Ernest! Well, he, too, was spooney. But he looked at the matter philosophically, and on his side could also—wait.

Henrietta was different to her sisters. Indeed, when people came to think about it, an idea would intrude that she could not be her parents' child. She was *petite*, clever, and attractive. A trim little body, with dark, flashing eye and neat ankle; whose dresses fitted her pretty figure like the softest of soft kid; whose every gesture was irresistible. She fashioned her own bonnets, fitted her own bodies, and draped her own skirts. She was the essence of neatness; a presence which made itself felt; not strictly beautiful, but enticing, man-compelling;—one whose card was filled to overflowing within five minutes

after she appeared at the ballroom door, around whom men loved to flit, but on whom it cannot with truth be recorded that they made any great impression. For she could fathom the value of soft whispers to a nicety, nor hesitated to nip in their bud the sweet nothings of poverty-stricken adorers—did more worthy game present itself to her notice. Not that she would pursue even big game too openly, or in too compromising a manner. She would watch it, and circumvent it, and get it into her toils; and then either take it up, or cast it down, as suited her convenience. And, so far, she had found it more convenient to cast it down.

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott—who was most particular in exacting a due regard for the hyphen and duplicated surname—was the wife of Mr. Claydon-Pigott; or, more properly speaking, Mr. Claydon-Pigott was the husband of Mrs. Claydon-Pigott.

She was tall, angular, and long past her meridian; with grey eyes, straight nose, and thin lips. A prim mouth and severe chin were the dominant characteristics of her face; for the eyes, which with Henrietta flashed so brightly, were in her case kept under control, most times bent upon the ground, and raised but at brief intervals when she was more than usually anxious to catch a fleeting expression, or form a definite conclusion.

Number Seventeen, York Place, was undistinguishable from the houses to its right and left, save by the number on its door and the pattern of the flower-boxes in its dining-room windows. Like its neighbours, it was coloured a pale buff, and, like them, had two windows on the ground floor and three on the first story. It was eminently respectable and in an eminently respectable quarter, where shops had not yet intruded, and where many rows of houses, similar

to that of which it formed a part, augmented the general respectability. Then, it was close to Albert Park, the *ne plus ultra* of fashion on that side of the town.

On the whole, it was a house which, if not all that Mrs. Claydon-Pigott could have desired, had many advantages, which was adapted to her means, and readily accessible to the best society—at least, to the best society which Camptown could afford. And that, according to Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, was by no means *the* best. But then, the good lady held her chin very high, and kept her nose well pointed towards the zenith. She might snub her husband when he sat by his own fire, but she represented him as standing on a pedestal when he formed the subject of conversation out of doors. Those times, he was no common trader, no calico-printer, no yarn-agent, not even a merchant-prince. He was a Government officer—an inspector of

factories—and, as such, or at least so Mrs. Claydon-Pigott thought, entitled to supreme rank in the circles which he helped to dignify.

Possibly, Mrs. Claydon-Pigott but asserted her husband's status, and therewith her own, the better to attain an object which pervaded her every act. Greatly as she affected to despise anything connected with trade, she had no hesitation about trying to secure for her family some portion of the advantages which trade could assure. Factory inspector though he might be, Mr. Claydon-Pigott could not live for ever; and Mrs. Claydon-Pigott worked hard, if so be she might settle Henrietta—and Fanny too, for that matter—in a comfortable home before any adverse circumstance should occur. But, unlike Henrietta, she made her approaches too apparent; and had occasionally frightened the very man at whom Henrietta, with light hand, was

casting a tempting fly, and who ceased to rise at the bait—overcome by the fear of securing not only a wife, but a mother-in-law.

In Fanny's case no great harm had been done. Hitherto, that young lady had shown an aptitude for fixing her affections in quarters from which no result could by any effort of imagination be expected; and, consequently, she had not the same reason as her sister for deprecating her mother's perversity. Her swains, being impecunious, had no fear of consequences. They could not keep a wife, much less a mother-in-law. From which it happened that Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's manœuvres made no impression upon their susceptibilities.

Now, if there was one thing more than another from which Mrs. Claydon-Pigott expected good results it was from the succession of little dinner-parties for which she, from time to time, issued unconventional

and pressing invitations. She deemed such parties to be far more convenient for her purpose than those of a greater magnitude. Ladies, and especially young ladies, were eschewed; and but three or four rising, well-gilded members of the other sex were invited for the same day. The parties being small, she was not for ever stretched upon the tenter-hooks—occupied in an endeavour to withdraw men's attentions from other girls and divert them towards her daughters. Her little dinners were snug and homelike—dinners at which Henrietta, Fanny, and even Esther, constituted the only attraction. All that she had to do was to keep the ball rolling, and contrive that the *invités* should leave the house either more or less captivated, or more or less compromised.

And yet, such occasions brought with them many vexations. Howsoever lofty the pedestal to which Mr. Claydon-Pigott

might be entitled, he was, after all, a salaried officer; and his salary—like most salaries—was incapable of unlimited expansion. Mrs. Claydon-Pigott no doubt secured the greater portion of it, and might possibly have secured the whole, had it not been for one most untoward circumstance. Mr. Claydon-Pigott might be subservient in most things, but he held, as from his official capacity it was self-evident that he must, full control over the purse-strings. He happened to be the one person who could draw the moneys to which he was entitled, and consequently exercised supreme authority in the matter of expenditure. He was no doubt quiet and unobtrusive, taking life as it came, and regretting but two epochs in his existence:—the first, that day on which he proposed to Mrs. Claydon-Pigott and was accepted; the second, that day on which they were united in a bond so indissoluble that, except for reasons which were not likely to occur, it

could not be terminated this side the grave. He drew his salary and handed over the larger portion of it to his wife, but a certain percentage he kept for himself. For he was genial, and fond of his club; and when Mrs. Claydon-Pigott became inconveniently pressing as to ways and means, he would retire thither, dine off a mutton-chop, and enjoy a quiet rubber.

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, then, possessed a skeleton in her domestic cupboard, and one which it was next to impossible to remove. For dinner-parties, even so small as hers, could not be catered for without a certain expenditure, and it was more especially at such times that her domestic skeleton strutted boldly forth. But, when there is a will, there is always, they say, a way, and, after all, a little party like the one to which she had invited Martin need not cost so very much. There were day-waiters ready to hire their services at ten, seven

and six, or even at five shillings. She could secure a couple at five shillings, which would be far more economical than engaging two at double the amount. Then, certain savings might be effected in the matter of fish and poultry. She could go to the fish-stores late on the previous afternoon and procure a turbot or cod for about half the money which it would cost next morning. And as for poultry, it would be absurd to buy a couple of young and expensive chickens, when more matured and cheaper fowls would answer every purpose. In all of which, Mrs. Claydon-Pigott was not attempting more than is attempted every day. For the great question has come to be—how many acquaintances can be turned off at the smallest possible outlay; what is the least costly champagne that can be given without committing a never-to-be-forgiven solecism; how many human beings can be packed into a given space without

the risk of asphyxia supervening? Ah, well! The pious wish of St. Theresa has often been thus parodied,—"I could blot out both heaven and hell, to serve Mammon for himself alone."

But then, Mammon is not invariably grateful, and Mrs. Claydon-Pigott would have been more likely to attain her purpose had she discarded the day-waiters and placed her reliance upon the ever-obedient Bilhah and Zilpah, or given fewer parties and better fish.

On this present Tuesday, the drawing-room had already been tidied, and Henrietta was standing with her mother on the hearthrug. The girl's figure showed to full advantage above the soft, black drapery of a well-made skirt. A white rose, with its deep-green leaves, enhanced the lustre of her glossy hair; her fair neck appeared the fairer when contrasted with the dark bodice which circled it with airy touch,

And yet, a cloud rested upon the girl's brow, and a set expression contracted her dainty lips—betokening a spirit not altogether in harmony with her appearance.

"Mamma!" she exclaimed in a determined tone.

"My dear?" queried her mother softly—seeing that Henrietta did not continue.

"Mamma! I must request you not to interfere in any way between Mr. Spencer and myself; neither to-night, nor on any future occasion."

"My love! What can you be dreaming about?"

"You know very well what I mean, mamma. And, as regards Mr. Spencer, I insist upon being allowed to take my own course."

"But, Henrietta dear, when did I require you to do otherwise?"

"Not perhaps in so many words," retorted the girl. "But you can never leave the

men alone. You worry them and frighten them, just when they are beginning to know me better."

"Henrietta! I am shocked. No girl ought to say such things to her mother."

"No mother ought to give her girl occasion to say them."

"Henrietta!"

"Not a word more, mamma. You perfectly understand to what I allude; and I forbid you," cried the *petite*, stamping the rug with her tiny foot, "to interfere between myself and Mr. Spencer—either by word or gesture."

This was to speak plainly and to the point; so much so, that Mrs. Claydon-Pigott was unable to find suitable phrases wherewith to censure so thankless a spirit. But her difficulty was solved by the door being thrown open and one of the day-waiters announcing—

"Mr. Ffrench!"

The cloud disappeared from Henrietta's face, and Mrs. Claydon-Pigott resumed her usual manner.

"How good of you to be so punctual," she purred; "and to have come at so short a notice. I am half afraid too," she added, patting Henrietta's cheek with her fan, "that you will find it a misspent evening. We have nobody but the dear children to entertain you!"

Martin intimated that he preferred small parties, and that to be admitted into the bosom of Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's family was in itself an honour.

"Flatterer!" exclaimed the lady, resting the tip of her fan gently on Martin's sleeve. "And so young! Where can you have picked up such pretty speeches? At Paris? Come, sir, confess. Henrietta, love, add your voice to mine, and tell him to confess!"

Before Martin could obey, the door was

once more flung wide, and the day-waiter announced—"Mr. George Spencer—Mr. Ernest Clegg!"

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott had barely greeted the new arrivals when a girl emerged from behind the muslin and rep draperies of the farthest window.

Henrietta bit her lips and frowned in a quite unsisterly fashion at the apparition. The cloud which crossed her features was however but transient, and she soon recovered her composure.

"Esther!" exclaimed her mother. "Pray, how long may you have been there, sitting like a nymph in her secluded grotto?"

"A long time, mamma. Long before you and Henrietta came into the room," she added, in a meaning tone.

"You sly puss!" exclaimed Mrs. Claydon-Pigott. "It's quite providential that we had no family secrets on the tapis—don't you think so, Mr. Spencer?"

Henrietta launched at her mother a warning glance, which caused her to drop Mr. Spencer and to turn to Martin. But that child! Really, she was too provoking. She always contrived to be in the way when least wanted.

Shortly after Esther emerged from the curtains, Fanny and Mr. Claydon-Pigott appeared; and five minutes later came the last *invité*—the Rev. James Kidwelly Thompson.

Then ought to have come dinner, but did not; and little by little the conversation began to flag, as it is wont to do during such periods of expectancy. Mrs. Claydon-Pigott became anxious, and divided her attention between the guests and her cares as hostess. Could any accident, she thought, have happened to the soup? Could the turbot have fallen to pieces in the fish-kettle? Could the lamps in the dining-room—camphine was then in vogue

—have refused to burn, or possibly have covered her snow-white linen and tastefully decorated table with a sooty shower? Worse than all, might not the day-cook have taken too much beer? But, at last, a step was heard upon the stairs; and, to her great relief, the door was opened by the head-waiter, who silently performed his best and most comprehensive bow.

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's features became once more animated, and she resumed her accustomed manner.

"Mr. Spencer, will you take Henrietta? Mr. Ffrench, kindly give an arm to Fanny. As for you, Ernest, I have nothing better to offer than that naughty darling—Esther. Mr. Thompson! for once the Church must be contented with my poor self."

The Rev. Kidwelly Thompson murmured something about the Church being highly honoured by the slightest recognition from Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, and declared that

its lines had fallen in pleasant places. At least, Mr. Thompson so appeared to assert; and as the reverend gentleman made it a rule to avoid all stony ground and thorns and other disagreeables of a kindred sort, and to meander through the flowery detours which lay to their right and left, he might possibly be a competent judge.

Mr. Thompson had graduated at the University of St. Mary Killigrew, and afterwards had taken orders, in the hope not only of making both ends meet, but of bettering his social status. During the first few years which followed ordination he had been satisfied with the green, yellow, or blue hood—he had almost forgotten the colour now—of St. Mary Killigrew. But, a church having been built to which he was appointed incumbent, he proceeded to a degree "ad eundem," and since that time had adopted the red-lined hood of the sister university. This had happened so many

years ago that St. Mary Killigrew was well-nigh forgotten, and St. Boniface, after the two or three visits which were requisite to digest the necessary details, had come to be one of the topics on which he most loved to dwell. Naturally, he had taken advantage of his incumbency to make himself better known and more highly esteemed, and to float minnow-like behind the ecclesiastical Tritons of his day. He followed, indeed, their lead, but at a distance. He considered himself orthodox; yet, minnow that he was and ever would be, hesitated to cast in his lot altogether with the Tritons. He modernized the fashion of his surplice, enlarged the repertory and colours of his altar-cloth, and threw wide the doors of his church at each recurring festival in the ecclesiastical calendar. In a word, he became exactly so far orthodox as was possible without attracting to himsef an upheaval of common

sense, and, having attained a so-happy consummation, the reverend gentleman managed to keep his head tolerably well above water, and to feather his nest with the softest of soft eider-down. Which last he had done so successfully that Mrs. Claydon-Pigott ranked him as a spare string to her bow, as a suitable husband, that is, for Fanny, should her designs on Martin prove abortive.

Nor was Kidwelly disinclined for the fatal plunge. He would have preferred Henrietta, but the girl remained obdurate to his most winning smiles and most elaborated commonplaces. He felt that for years to come he could not hope to call her wife. And, after all, was game worth the the candle; was it wise to dangle for so long and in a state of such great uncertainty after any woman, even were that woman—Henrietta? No! To do so would be ridiculous. At his time of life he must

follow a more quickly to be successful trail. He could not hope to cull one of the richest flowers of the Camptown artistocracy; and, feeling that it was next to impossible to secure Henrietta, he was willing to marry Fanny.

Kidwelly Thompson sat on Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's right, and on his other side was Henrietta. Facing him was Martin, and opposite to Henrietta her sister Fanny. From which it happened that the reverend gentleman could feast his eyes upon, if unable to whisper sweet things to, the lady whom he had determined to subdue. Unfortunately, she did not heed his glances, for to her left sat Ernest, and to the latter's blue, dreamy eyes her own were for the most part turned. It was very annoying; but Kidwelly did not on that account pronounce his chance of success to be irretrievably sped. Fanny he felt sure was altogether different to her sister. A few soft words

and tender sighs, in odd corners and at odd times, would probably divert her susceptible heart towards himself.

The day-cook's soup was far from warm; but the company, being more than half-famished, swallowed it with greater satisfaction than could have been expected. And Mr. Claydon-Pigott sent round the sherry a second time, so as to counteract the lukewarmness of the soup.

"I am so sorry," remarked Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, "that Miss Lander should have disappointed us. It is more especially unfortunate, Mr. Ffrench, when such an accident happens to a small party like ours, and when it is too late to fill the defaulter's chair. The table looks *so* lobsided. Henrietta dear, would you move a *trifle* nearer to Mr. Spencer; I am afraid that Mr. Thompson is the least bit inconvenienced."

Kidwelly declared that he was not inconvenienced in the slightest degree; but,

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott insisting that he must be, Henrietta obeyed, first casting at her mother a glance which served once more to recall their late conversation.

"Were you at the last chamber-concert, Mr. Thompson?" inquired the hostess. "No! How unfortunate. Biagrasso rendered the 'Eroica Choral' most exquisitely; one might have heard a pin fall."

"Possibly, my dear," suggested Mr. Claydon-Pigott, "Signore Biagrasso does not exercise the same infatuation over Mr. Thompson that he appears to do in your case."

"Lewis! How shocking! But you were ever a barbarian, love;—more wedded to your rubber than to classical music."

The young men appearing, from their silence, to feel with Mr. Claydon-Pigott, the conversation about Biagrasso languished. Indeed, however fashionable the signore and his chamber-concerts might be with certain

of the Camptown folk, to most people a frequently simulated admiration for fundamental and accidental, for equivocal and transient, chords, for the union of melodies and harmonic sources, had become wearisome. For once Mrs. Claydon-Pigott had attempted to revivify dead bones, and she was about to start a more congenial subject, when Esther exclaimed—

"Mr. Spencer! I know something."

"No doubt, my dear, you know a great many things."

"But I know something *very* particular."

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott performed a useless solo with her fan, and Henrietta looked uncomfortable.

"Something," continued the irrepressible, "about you. Something that you would like to know very much."

"Then, *ma mie*, pray divulge your knowledge."

"No; but guess."

"Impossible!"

"Please guess, Mr. Spencer; it will be much greater fun."

"Impossible," he insisted. "I have no talent that way."

"Then you do not deserve to be told. But I know," and she cast an exultant look at her sister. "Henrietta says that you are not to be interfered with."

That Henrietta had arrived at such a conclusion showed, no doubt, a most friendly intention towards himself. Yet he failed to comprehend whither any such conclusion, however friendly, could ultimately tend; and was about to prosecute a subject so personally interesting, when his attention was attracted elsewhere.

The assistant day-waiter, in a vain attempt to compass two objects at the same time, dropped from his left hand a plate of turbot before Fanny, and with his right handed the lobster-sauce to Martin. He

had succeeded in the same manœuvre often enough, but on this occasion he darted to receive another plate from his senior at Mr. Claydon-Pigott's elbow before the sauce-boat was clear of Martin's shoulder. Against this it struck, and fell—discharging its contents upon the sleeve, breast, and lapel of his coat.

Martin had that evening donned his best suit; one almost new, which had, in fact, but recently come to hand from his London tailor.

"Mr. Ffrench! I am so grieved," cried Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, with for once a ring of true sympathy in her voice. "Pray run to the maids—you will find at least one of them in the back room!"

Martin hurried from the table, and, outside the door, found not only Bilhah but also Zilpah. Bilhah, with many condolences, mingled with much contempt for the awkwardness of men, hastened to

scrape the sauce from his coat; whilst Zilpah ran for a sponge, a towel, and basin of clean water. Their ready fingers soon made him presentable, and when he returned to the dining-room his coat did not look much the worse for the catastrophe. Moreover, the accident had at least one good effect. It thoroughly overawed Esther, and kept her tongue within bounds until the ladies retired.

Later in the evening, Mrs. Claydon-Pigott had the centre table cleared, and then she initiated a game of *vingt-et-un*. Cards formed one of her magic spells for preventing the conversation at her small parties becoming dull. They kept the young people occupied, and fostered a closer intimacy between her daughters and the men to whom she would bind them by sweeter cords. Over the cards, smiles would soon develop into laughter; and laughter, when once started, would prove

contagious. Then, round games permitted a community of interests, the clubbing of two piles of counters; and who could tell but that such temporary alliances might pave the way for others far more lasting and important.

Of course Fanny and Ernest had amalgamated their counters long before Mrs. Claydon-Pigott was aware of the fact, and ere she could remedy the mischief. It was very stupid of Fanny, especially as no time could have been better than the present for opening the trenches against Mr. Ffrench. But when she turned to see whether Martin's features showed any trace of disappointment, she noticed that Esther had mingled his counters with her own, and that the two were deeply engaged in concerting schemes for their mutual profit. Ah, well! At all events she had one cause for congratulation — Henrietta and Mr. Spencer were sitting side by side.

"Perhaps, Miss Claydon-Pigott," suggested the latter, turning to Henrietta, "as an association of goods appears to be the order of the day, you and I had better follow the example."

"Excuse me," returned Henrietta stiffly; "I prefer to play my own game."

"What can the girl be thinking about?" exclaimed Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, *sotto voce*. "She treats the man as if he were nobody." And the good lady fumed inwardly.

Henrietta played recklessly, and lost every counter that she had once possessed.

"Pray let me lend you a dozen or two," said Spencer eagerly.

"Thank you," retorted Henrietta, almost turning her back towards him. "I see that Fanny is rolling in wealth. Lend me a dozen, Fan, there's a good girl—or, perhaps *you* will be so kind, Mr. Thompson?" she added, shooting a bright smile at Kidwelly.

She looked so bewitching, and spoke so prettily, that Kidwelly was translated to a heaven of unsuspecting bliss. Could it be that, after all, his suit was not hopeless! He trusted so; gave her the counters with a trembling hand, thinking the while how much better-looking she was than Fanny.

And for the rest of the evening the girl paid him little attentions and hung upon his words with an apparent interest which, an hour or two before, he should have thought impossible. Once, and once only, she raised her eyes to Spencer's face, and gave him a glance, half-veiled, indeed, by her long, dark lashes, but which stirred his heart.

Martin and Esther held the bank, and the pile in front of them was rapidly increasing in bulk. Martin was dealing, when, without any previous warning, his partner exclaimed—

"I know something, Fanny!"

"Don't be tiresome, Esther," interposed Fanny, colouring; "there's a dear child. As Mr. Spencer said," she continued, in a vain hope of diverting the girl's attention from herself, "no doubt you know a great many things."

"But I know something about you—something very particular."

"Pray be quiet, Esther," cried Henrietta, coming to her sister's rescue. "Little girls should be seen, not heard."

"That's what you always say, Henrietta. But I'm not such a baby as you think. Fanny knows well enough what I mean. I was behind the sofa in the back drawing-room one day when Ernest came in, and then he and Fanny——"

"For heaven's sake, mamma," cried poor Fanny, colouring to the very tips of her ears, "send her out of the room! She is always inventing the most horrible stories."

"But it's not a story, and you know it

isn't! I kept quite still, and then you sat down on the sofa, and—— "

There is no telling what atrocious act on the part of her sister Esther would have revealed, had not Mrs. Claydon-Pigott seized the still-talking girl by the arm and marched her out of the room.

"Really, mamma," exclaimed Henrietta, "it is high time you sent that child to school; she is getting quite unmanageable at home."

"She seems to be endowed with very high spirits," murmured the Reverend Kidwelly in Henrietta's ear. "I should be charmed to possess such a sister. It would be so intensely interesting to watch the gradual development of her character, and to direct it into the right paths."

Henrietta regarded him contemptuously. The man was even a greater idiot than she had taken him to be.

CHAPTER III.

AN ARTIST'S DEN.

Kidwelly Thompson lingered in Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's drawing-room a few, and for him too short, moments after the other young men had left. His quickly resuscitated hope of attaining the first place in Henrietta's affections had been short-lived —obliterated by her last contemptuous smile. But he lingered; if haply, and for a time, he might gaze into Fanny's soft eyes and press with due unction her dimpled hand. And then he too departed.

Spencer, Ernest, and Martin quitted the house together, and were about to separate when the first, looking at his watch, exclaimed—

"It's quite early yet, Ffrench,—not eleven! What say you to a game at billiards before going home? Come, Ernst! you must want a cigar, and Tom is sure to be in the billiard-room with possibly a man or two from the barracks."

Ernest consented without demur, but Martin hesitated.

"I've got an awful lot of work for to-morrow," he said. "There's a mail in from South America."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Spencer, taking his arm. "A game of billiards will clear your brain after old Pigott's claret. It was a trifle too much weighted for my palate—too much spirit about it, and too little of the *cuve-mère*."

"Possibly of British manufacture," suggested Ernest.

"Not so bad as that," said George; "but let us admit it to have been blended. What did the old boy call it, Ernst—Lafitte?"

"Even so," replied Ernest, laughing.

"Well, never mind. We will wash it down with something better. Come along, Ffrench."

And Martin went. If he happened to be a trifle late next morning, Fleming could do what was necessary—he always did. He should probably be at the office before Mr. Nesbitt; or, in any case, could frame a good excuse for his unpunctuality.

George Spencer lived with his father and mother at the Cedars—one of the largest houses in Albert Park. His father was a commission-merchant, a calico-printer, a yarn-agent, the director of a bank; a man who was known to have large sums invested in good securities, who lived within his means, and who, as each half-year came round, added to his capital. He was, in short, independent of business, and folks said that he ought to retire and leave an opening for younger and still struggling

men. But no such idea had crossed his mind. He was proud of his position and gratified by the consideration which it secured. Separated from business, he would have felt adrift; cast loose upon a world with which he had but little community of sentiment, in which he would be swamped, and whose aims and aspirations were foreign to the tenour of his life. Nor could it be otherwise. He had once been as the office-boy of romance, that hero of a thousand tales, who, combating through evil report and good against opposing forces, ever attains the goal. There existed but one difference between the fiction and himself. The hero of romance rises through living in a state of grace, or by the special intervention of Providence. Mr. Spencer had risen by diligence and undeviating attention to his work. He rarely went to kirk or chapel. He had laboured to amass guineas, and for that alone. And, having devoted

to the matter all the energy at his command, had been fortunate enough to succeed. As thousand after thousand accumulated at his banker's, so did he proceed from cottage to villa and from villa to the mansion in Albert Park.

There was but one burden which he found it impossible to carry coexistently with himself in his upward flight—and that was, his wife. He had married early, and for years afterwards his good lady had swilled down the kitchen, pipeclayed the doorstep, and studied after her simple fashion domestic economy in its every detail. For years she had been duteous and patient, and, eschewing the assistance of a maid-of-all-work, had dusted the front parlour and scrubbed the floors with her then red hands.

And, now that she found herself translated to the Cedars—surrounded by works of art, treading on soft pile, sheltered from a too-bright sun by draperies of delicately tinted

silk—she was uncomfortable and lonely. She had nothing in common with the richly clad dames who frequented her brocade-upholstered, artistically decorated rooms; was nervous, indeed, in their presence and regretted the society of her former gossips. Education in her case had been neglected, nor was she able to do much towards improving her children's mental growth. Amidst her splendour she found but two sources of consolation,—the untiring devotion of her husband and the great love with which she regarded her elder son.

When, at the age of sixteen, George Spencer left Bishop Oldham's Grammar School, he had been sent to Germany, there to complete his education. Mr. Spencer held the great English public schools in extreme abhorrence. He had noted the habits of the young men who had come from these to Camptown, and had contrasted them with those of the

painstaking youths who flocked to it from Germany. He observed the former to be addicted to athletic sports and other amusements; the latter to be hard-working, plodding, never to want a holiday at inconvenient seasons, and content to work for the smallest of salaries if they could but obtain a footing in the stronghold of British commerce. Not being swayed by religion in any shape or form, he overlooked the nobler, franker dispositions which its principles had engendered amongst the former, and took no heed of the materialism which its absence entailed amongst the latter. Materialism, indeed, was his guiding star, on whose shrine he had staked his all, and before which all must bow. He did not see that materialism of itself can provide no life-giving power, and that its very existence is alone rendered tolerable by the Christianity which surrounds it, hampers it, and causes it to be more than

half ashamed of its patent insufficiency. He but knew that—

> "The books were opened t'other day,
> At all the shops, for Church and play.
> The Church got *six;* Hoyle *sixty-seven!*
> How great the odds for Hell 'gainst Heaven!"

He had marked this well, and that not only once, but often, although unable to read between the lines. He saw clearly enough that the Church got *six*, Hoyle *sixty-seven;* and in face of such long odds had come to regard Christianity as a foolish superstition, unnecessary and effete, which rendered money-making an impossibility on one day out of every seven, and yet remained an uncomfortable accident not at all times or for long together to be dismissed from his thoughts. He shut his eyes to the fact that, whilst in some cases Christianity but fascinates the imagination, in the great majority of instances it purifies the heart.

Even when quite young, George Spencer had been inclined to follow in his father's track. Then came the residence of two or three years in Germany, during which a deliberately accepted and declared atheism had been grafted upon his previous and somewhat modified materialism. And yet, withal, he was clever and industrious; a good man of business; of fair presence; and considered by the more advanced spirits in Camptown to be one of their rising men.

When the three friends entered the billiard-room, they found, as Spencer had predicted, his brother and a couple of officers from the barracks. A pool was soon started, and sixpences began to exchange owners. The cigars were good, the brandy and soda so insidious after Mr. Claydon-Pigott's doubtful claret, that time slipped insensibly away, and the clock was on the stroke of one before Martin thought

of looking at his watch. "George!" he then exclaimed; "it's awfully late. I must be off."

"Nonsense, Ffrench, it's early yet! Don't be the first to break up the party!"

But this time Martin was immovable. It would be fully two o'clock before he could reach the Widow Toler's.

"I suppose," cried Ernest, as the other was leaving the room, "that you'll be at the studio, to-morrow

"Possibly, Ernst. I shall be sure to come, if I can get away from the office."

"You'll be able to do that, never fear. Well, ta-ta," and Ernest turned towards the table, bent upon potting one of the garrison and on pocketing another sixpence.

Ernest was an easy-going, frank sort of fellow; one whom the world dubs nobody's enemy but his own; hail-fellow with all, and wasting the hours which might have led to fame. He had taken to an artist's

life because he thought it an easy-going, jolly sort of existence, and one which would detach him from the drudgery of the desk. His studio was on the topmost story of a block of chambers in Tib Lane, and was reached by a steep, grimy stair. The basement of the building was devoted to shops; the first floor to respectable offices; the second to accountants, respectable and the reverse; the third to debt collectors and birds of prey; the fourth to tenants from whom it was impossible to collect a debt, however small that debt might be. As for Ernest's particular door, it was invariably locked; and upon one of its panels was affixed a paper—never removed except when by its vetustity it had become a witness to its own mendacity, and then only to be replaced by a facsimile—bearing in bold, clerk-like writing the words, "Out of town for a few days." The knock of duns was well-known by the reiterated taps becoming

each second more insistent. Such knocks as these were disregarded, and the tapper might tap on until midnight or cockcrow, or for whatever time he listed. None but its *habitués* were permitted to enter this private Alsatia, and their tap, which was readily distinguishable from that of duns, would fetch the artist, and cause him to exclaim in a loud, sharp key, "Who's there?"

"I," would be the indefinite response—sufficiently definite, however, to make the door swing back, leaving, as it did so, sparse room for one person to enter at a time.

It was a curious, most inartistic den. Yet it had a good north light descending upon the easel from its single window; dull-red walls, powerless to injure high tones and shadow and demi-tint by wayward cross reflections; nor did it contain anything within its four corners to distract

from work save its very dreariness. Empty wine-cases were scattered here and there to serve as chairs; the floor was carpetless, save where an old rug lay before the cinder-covered hearth and rusty grate. Against the door stood an old screen, behind whose green-baize shelter the models were wont to doff their bonnets and don the mediæval vestments or Roman stole which Ernest obtained when wanted from a Camptown theatre. A flavour of pigments pervaded the air, but there were few signs of recent work. On a table beneath the window, and surrounded by a medley of tubes, chalk, charcoal, and dirty rags, rested a palette—its surface thickly clotted with half or quite dry dabs of many colours, and with a sheaf of neglected brushes thrust through its thumb-hole.

A sketch in oils hung over the mantel-piece, representing one seated on a white horse, crowned and with a bow, who was

followed by a figure on a red horse, girt with a great sword. Then came a black horse, whose rider carried a pair of balances, and, last of all, a pale horse, whereon sat Death, accompanied by the armies of Hell. The group was girdled by, and floated on purple and yellow clouds, whilst the legs of the horses were well extended, and their bodies amazingly fore-shortened. It was a grand, allegorical subject, and its completion on a large scale had been a standing day-dream with the artist for half a dozen years. But its elaboration required study, and application, and patience—the very qualities in which Ernest was most deficient. So he continued to gaze at the sketch, turn the matter over in his mind, and consider what size of canvas would be best fitted to the subject.

Meantime, he painted heads, or rather, the head of one girl, whose identity on the several canvases it was impossible to

mistake, although some variety had been attempted with regard to accessories and costume. Now, she was represented in a dress of dark-green velvet, with yellow slashings to sleeves that were puffed above the elbow, and with a white camellia in her breast; now, she was in black silk, with red slashings, and a yellow rose; now, in white satin, with blue slashings, and a bunch of blue forget-me-nots. The portraits hung in various stages of completion against the walls; but, in every case, with the hands as yet unfinished, and with the drapery and background more or less suggestive. But it was Minnie—always the same Minnie.

However, there happened just now to be a picture on the easel more ambitious in its scope, and representing an animal with horns breathing its last gasp beneath a parching sun, and amid hillocks of arid sand. The animal was of doubtful genus, the locality might be in any quarter of the globe, but

on the afternoon which followed Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's little party, Ernest was standing before the picture in a worshipping frame of mind, giving it a dab now here, now there. It had evidently been on hand for a considerable time, for the touches of that morning stood forth, clear and glistering, from an otherwise sunken texture.

Between the dabs, which he appeared to distribute impartially over the entire conception, Ernest whistled softly a favourite bar or two from "La Traviata." Then, stepping back to admire from a distance the effect of what he had done, he trolled, in a pure baritone, and to a tune of his own composition, the well-known, comfort-bearing words:—

> "earned with much ease,
> This morning, my fees,
> And hey for ten guineas to-morrow!"

He was interrupted by the sound of feet upon the stairs, and by a sharp double

knock upon the door. It could not be a dun—no dun ever came accompanied by such a clatter, or attended by such a *posse comitatus*. So Ernest moved boldly to the wicket of his fortalice and threw it wide open, admitting George Spencer and his brother Tom, the cheery, bright Frank Copeland, and, last of all, Martin, with the Globe-trotter at his heels.

"Hallo, you fellows," he cried, his face radiant with smiles. "Where on earth do you spring from?"

"We've been lunching at the club," explained George, "and met the Globe-trotter and Martin at the door." Then the speaker settled himself upon one of the empty wine-cases, and the rest following his example, the studio was soon obscured by clouds of tobacco smoke, which curled, and writhed, and floated above the bowls of half a dozen pipes. Ernest was attacked by a sudden cough.

"Perhaps I'd better open the window," he suggested.

"Maybe you had," returned Macpherson dryly, "an' let out the smell of that beastly paint."

"Why do you come, if you don't like it?" retorted Ernest.

"It's a duty that I owe to art, lad, even when it must be sought amang such surroundings," and he looked at the dirty palette and heaped-up filthy medley on the table.

"Been hard at work, Ernst?" inquired George.

"Exactly, *mein herr*. I've been giving a few touches to 'The Dying Gazelle.'"

"You've not improved it much," said George, casting a look at the picture.

"Don't you think so?" exclaimed the other dejectedly. "I've been strengthening the lights in the bottom sky and nearer sand-hills, and I've put a thought more pathos into the creature's eye."

"Strengthening the lights! Why, you've made the thing twice as yellow as it was before."

"That's aureolin," returned the artist complacently. "It's a beautiful colour—one of the best yellows known."

"Perhaps, lad, you've no seen the desert?" inquired Macpherson.

"Cannot say that I have, Globe-trotter."

"Weel then, I'll tell thee. There's nae mair aureolin to it, if that's what ye call the colour, in midday than at dead o' night. An' what's yon thing in the corner, that looks like garden pales, fresh painted, pointed at top, an' stuck in the ground just as they came frae the cutting?"

"That's a cactus," explained Ernest, "which the gazelle was attempting to reach when it fell exhausted upon the sand."

"An' may be, lad, you've no seen a cactus?"

"Not I," retorted Ernest defiantly.

"Weel then, I'll tell thee. Yon thing is mair like a coo-cabbage than a cactus. An' it's not vera like a coo-cabbage."

"But I say, Ernest," interposed Martin, sorry that the picture should be so lightly esteemed, "what did you paint the animal from? I don't know much about art, but I like that better than the sky."

"From a doe, belonging to the people at home, which died, and I took the sketch one morning before they buried it."

"But a doe hasn't got antlers," objected Martin.

"That one hadn't. But I put them in, to break the monotony of the sand-hill against which the thing has fallen."

"An' where did ye light on the horns?" inquired Macpherson.

The artist's eye sparkled, as with anticipated triumph.

"I copied them from nature, Globe-

trotter. I sketched them from a pair which hang in the museum."

"For a' that," returned Macpherson, "you've put a grieve's bonnet on a gillie's head. Thae horns came frae Iceland, or may be frae Greenland, but nae from south of Pentland Firth."

It was too bad. Such rough criticism was altogether more than Ernest could endure.

"You had better have painted the thing yourself," he exclaimed warmly.

"Nae, nae, lad. I've no turn that way mysel'. An' I'm nae art-critic. But I'm sure o' one thing. Ye canna drive out Nature with a club."

George Spencer had been listening, with a twinkle in his eye. He was a fairly good artist, himself, for an amateur; and when he took up the brush, possessed far more perseverance, a lighter touch, and better eye for colour than Ernest.

"But look here, Ernst," he said.

"You can never express intense heat or give atmosphere by daubs of aureolin. I'd pumice-stone the thing, paint out the cactus, or whatever it may be, and take it on the hottest day you can pick out to the sands at Lytham. Do that, and you may make something of it yet."

"Ah, yes, I know what you mean," sneered Ernest; "work it up with layer upon layer of glazes, and make it so smooth that all expression will be lost."

"It hasn't got much to lose," muttered George.

"But that's not my way," continued the other. "I don't spare my colours. I put them on with unstinted hand, and produce a better effect with less time and trouble."

"And ultimately," retorted George, "attain the plum-pudding sort of impossibility to which 'The Dying Gazelle' is advancing with rapid strides."

"Nonsense!"

"It's no nonsense, Ernst. You and a lot more mistake violence and affectation for force, and, what is worse, despise truth. You paint through coloured and deceptive lenses, and attempt to improve nature."

"But the highest art," argued Ernest, "does not copy nature. Nature cannot be copied. We cannot produce upon canvas anything so perfect as that which can be seen in fields and woods, amid mountained valleys, and on the sea-coast. Therefore, we invent and create, revel in beauty of form and brilliant colouring, and finally work up the productions of our brain until, by their essential quality, they captivate the eye."

"You are half right, Ernst, and yet half wrong. Paintings may be the outcome of mind and genius; but, to please, they must have nature for a basis. The best picture is the one which follows nature

so closely that it does not harass the spectator by its untruthfulness, and yet which permits a sense, towering above all else, that it is the work of a master capable of asserting his individuality, whose spirit is stamped upon it, and whose brush has overcome the technicalities of his profession. That is what I call—to be an artist."

"Sae far as that goes," said Macpherson, "you're a bit above me, Mr. Spencer. For myself, I think Nature licks a' the paintings i' the world. An' I'd rather stand beside a clear burn than afore the finest picture. I dinna ken what good paintings do, after all is said."

"Come, Globe-trotter!" cried Martin. "I don't know much about it myself; but you must be wrong there. Everybody likes to have paintings on their walls!"

"Weel, laddie, they may please the imagination, an' so does a fair an' feckless

woman. What I say is,—they don't do a bit o' real good."

"They refine taste," protested George. "They pervade the world with the various emotions which they produce, and make better and more cultivated men."

"They canna do a' that, I doubt, Mr. Spencer. They may scratch the surface of a man's feelings, but they canna touch the heart. They're naught for that, alongside a lonely glen or mountain tarn."

At that moment came a soft double tap at the door.

"That's Minnie, for a fiver," cried Ernest; and he was rising from his wine-case, when George forestalled him.

"Come in, Minnie," exclaimed the latter. "Don't be shy—it's only the usual lot."

And then a modest-looking girl, with fair wavy hair, delicate features, and pale rather than highly-coloured complexion, entered the studio.

"Sit here, Minnie," said George, pointing to one-half of his own inverted box. "There's room for both of us. Ernst is more highly favoured than usual, to-day—his chairs are fully occupied."

Minnie Railton took the proffered seat, nestling herself comfortably, and at as great a distance from George as the wine-case would admit, against a jamb of the mantelpiece. She was a winsome little body, quietly dressed, with neat gloves and trim boots. And yet, withal, she was a model—at least, she had sat to Ernest as such, although to him alone. She it was who had inspired those half-length studies in velvet and white satin, with their many-coloured slashings and white camellias, yellow roses, and blue forget-me-nots. These he did of a morning, whilst she sat under the light shed upon her pretty face from the high-raised window. But, besides her morning visits, she would appear of an

afternoon, as on that day, and sit quietly whilst the others talked, or join in their laughter at some quick retort or lively sally. Poor Minnie! Such occasions formed the pleasantest hours in all her day—the hours to which she looked forward as to a golden dream. Rumour whispered that she was the daughter of a surgeon now deceased; but the *habitués* of the studio had not essayed to penetrate her secret.

Ernest had never told how he had first obtained her for a model. Possibly he had accosted her at the Hesperian Gardens, and watched by her side the storming of Seringapatam, to be seen there of a summer's evening. Possibly he had met her in the omnibus as he came to town, and, attracted by her pretty face and piquant manner, had mustered sufficient courage to request a sitting. However that might be, he had never floundered into love.

"Have you been to the theatre lately, Minnie?" inquired Frank Copeland, when the girl had taken her seat.

"Not very lately. Not since the opera began."

"But you are fond of music?" he suggested.

"Yes," replied the girl. "But I like it best in the gardens, when coloured lamps are hanging in the trees, and hundreds of people are dancing on the big platform."

"You would enjoy the gardens in Vienna, and like to sit there, listening to Strauss' band," exclaimed George.

"Why shouldna music be sae good in England as at Vienna?" asked Macpherson defiantly.

"I don't know why not," said George abstractedly, sunk in a recollection of long-past and happy hours. "But it is never the same thing to me."

"Hoot, laddie! You're too fond o' foreign parts. They've drawn frae your veins aboon half your native blood."

"You may be right, Globe-trotter, and possibly it's better so."

"I doubt it, man! I'll no say but what the German makes a good colonist; but he needs transplanting. In the fatherland he's but a poor loon, an' stays to light his pipe atween each dozen strokes o' the plane or tap o' his hammer."

"Perhaps, you've not seen Germany?" remarked Ernest maliciously.

"No, lad. But i' the States I've spoken to many that have, an' I've read about it, and may be ken its character as weel as some folk who've seen it."

"I should advise you to try Germany for a bit, Minnie," cried Copeland. "You would be sure to captivate some stout *Herr*."

Minnie uttered a low, silvery laugh.

"I would rather secure an English one," she retorted.

"You might get married in Germany easy enough, I've nae sort o' doubt about it," remarked Macpherson, "and maybe you could as easy get rid o' your husband, when you were tired of his ways."

"Nonsense, Globe-trotter!" exclaimed George, with a show of irritation.

"You've no read, I suppose, o' the general wha played each night of his life a rubber o' whist wi' his three divorced ladies?"

"Quite an exceptional case, I assure you," cried George.

"Weel, I hope it may be."

"I wonder that you never tried matrimony yourself, Globe-trotter," exclaimed Copeland.

"Weel, man, I've ne'er lighted on the right sort o' body. Women are douce enough afore they've been wi' a lad to

the minister; but there's no telling what road they'll gang afterwards, and I'm nae so sure that it's a good thing for the cuck-stool to ha' gone out o' use. I'm getting in the vale o' years, an' I've no seen the woman that I sud like to tackle, save my ain mother."

"Unfortunately, a man may not marry his mother, or even his grandmother," said Copeland, laughing.

"Laugh away, lad!" returned the other good-humouredly; "an' may you ne'er ken what it is to laugh out o' the wrang corner o' your mouth."

"That's not likely," said Copeland bitterly. "Girls, nowadays, look shy at younger sons with a paltry five thousand at their back. But I say, you fellows," he added, hastening to change the subject, "I suppose you will be at the Locksley Archers on the twenty-first?"

"I shall for one," said Martin.

"The Griersons have the best floor for dancing in all Camptown," remarked George.

"And do not spare the champagne," suggested Ernest.

"Not they," echoed Frank. "Grierson is a regular brick."

Minnie Railton said nothing, but uttered a little sigh. Although, at times, she might forget her dreary life when seated with the others in the studio, this allusion to the Locksley Archers made her feel that in truth she was not as they; that, whilst they were enjoying themselves at Barton Hall, she would be treading her path alone. At such times, her lot seemed very hard, an unjust dispensation, a fortuity very sore to her poor little heart. Martin Ffrench, she felt sure, must pity her. He was ever good and kind, and, then, she glanced shyly to where he sat. But his eyes were turned away, and his

mind was evidently intent upon something far different to her pain. She rose from her seat with dimmed eyes, and prepared to leave the room.

"Good-bye, Ernest," she said gently. "It is getting late, and I for one must be going home."

"Late!" he exclaimed. "Not a bit of it. Well, if you must go, you must. Good-bye, my dear;" and he opened the door for the girl to pass through.

"Poor Minnie!" said George. "She is a tender little thing, at times. But, Ernst, I must be going, too; it's close upon three o'clock!"

"So must I," said Martin.

And one by one they disappeared—leaving the artist to himself, and with leisure to make what improvements he might in the distant sky, the aureolin-besprinkled sand-hills, and palmate horns of "The Dying Gazelle."

CHAPTER IV.

DOROTHY.

Dorothy Grierson was seated beneath a chestnut, and was not only alone but preoccupied. The wide-spreading, densely-clad boughs of the tree extended above her head, and protected her from the glare which lay beyond. A straw hat rested upon her lap, and an unheeded work-basket stood on a camp-stool at her side. The dinner-party to which Martin was invited had come and gone. It had happened yesterday, and that afternoon the girl sat alone, the flickering shadows from the tree-leaves falling upon her head, her soul wrapt in pleasurable dreams.

The party had been altogether different to that little one *chez* Mrs. Claydon-Pigott; more formal, perhaps, yet more enjoyable. The table had been covered with massive silver and choice plants; soups, fish, *entrées*, poultry, sweets, and dessert, had followed one another in long profusion; the guests had alternately toyed with their plates and sipped their hock, champagne, or curaçoa. The talk had for the most part centred on Signore Biagrasso, the "Eroica Choral," chamber concerts, and harmonic sources; yet Dorothy had enjoyed herself immensely. She was even sorry to have bid her last adieu, and to be left with her father in the large, old drawing-room. Not that she was unhappy, even then. She had fresh memories on which to dwell, fresh recollections of a manly face which had smiled on her so often—really, so very often—during the last few hours. Then, she would again see that same face on the

twenty-first; for its owner had not only accepted her written invitation, but had verbally confirmed his note. He had shaken hands so warmly when saying good-night, and her father had button-holed him for so long a time, that—without seeking to gauge her sensations too accurately—she felt an unaccustomed gladness.

And so, on the following afternoon, Dorothy sat beneath the chestnut, her work-basket unheeded and her fingers unemployed. At a few paces to her left a miniature cascade, supplied with water from the pond above, fell sparkling over moss-grown rocks into a little basin. The rockery was artificial, but with an origin so remote as to vest it with the attributes of nature. Ferns had seeded themselves in convenient angles; rhododendrons spread their trailing branches over the tender fronds, shading them from the summer heat; whilst on the topmost bank, above

the rhododendrons, towered a thicket of larch and spruce. A velvety sward carpeted the little dell on which the chestnut stood, except where a narrow stream, springing from out the basin, carried the fallen water into a brook beyond. And all around the sward were trees and matted shrubs, preventing the spot from being overlooked, and giving to Dorothy a sense of grateful solitude. "The double trill, the liquid gurgling shake" of the more southern nightingale were never heard so far to the west and north; but the thrush, seeking its food in the thick turf, quickened the silence with its sweet-toned song.

And there sat Dorothy, gazing at the falling water, listening to the trilling birds, and imbibing long draughts of happiness. Her black eyes were soft and wistful; her lips, neither too full nor yet too tenuous, were slightly parted, and showed the pearl-like teeth within; her cheeks were pure

and healthy in their young bloom; her dark hair served to heighten the delicate flesh-tints of a little ear and rounded neck; her figure was graceful; her feet both small and shapely: her head was bent forward, resting upon a hand small and shapely as the foot. She had lost all consciousness of self, the place, the hour, and her thoughts were roaming amid

> "lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
> Of olive, aloe, and maize, and vine."

Thus far as to the casket. But the jewel which the casket enshrined was of greater worth, a pure soul like to that of "the joyous, modest, and loving Nausicaa;" nay, more like to that of her own martyred namesake, whose deep tenderness once so melted the heart of the scoffing Theophilus as to cause him to eat of the fruit from heaven. Dorothy's soul might at times be tinged with a more sober grey than theirs; at times be more tainted with what

is earth-born, unable in its young gladness to distinguish the white, narcotic poppy from the pure lily of the field, rejoicing with a too great joy in that which doth not profit—but it was better so, more natural to her time of life.

Her mother had died many years ago; but the girl still treasured the sweet counsel which had been imparted as she knelt by that mother's side, and, though orphaned and alone, looked forward to that better dawn which her mother had first taught her to expect.

Mr. Grierson had bestowed upon her education every advantage which can be derived from the possession of a long purse. The Signore Biagrasso had been her music-master, Herr Müller had instructed her in German, Monsieur Lagrange in French, and an English governess had piloted her through the labyrinths of Lindley Murray and the mazes of composition and

modern history. Mr. Prothero, the rector of Barton, had even inducted her to a certain knowledge of Greek and Latin, and that with such effect as to give her more accurate ideas than fall to the lot of most girls as to what constitutes purity of diction. And yet Mr. Grierson, had he been so minded, could have lamented with old Bernardo—"As for my poor child, Romola, it is as I always said—the cramming with Latin and Greek," with German, French, and music, "has left her as much a woman as if she had done nothing all day but prick her fingers with the needle." In a word Dorothy remained, despite her studies and somewhat learning—thank Heaven that it was so!—purely woman, untinctured by pedantry, ministering to the sick, alleviating sorrow when it came across her path, joyous in herself, and, that afternoon, dreaming of sweet possibilities, which were nursed by the trickling rill, fanned by the gently

swaying leaves, and stimulated by the notes of a gladsome thrush.

And still Dorothy mused, watching the spray as it floated about the ferns, and playing unconsciously with the streamers of her garden-hat. After a while her lips were parted and appeared to shape some name like that of—Martin. If so, thrice happy Martin—secure in his beloved Agnes; esteemed, if not loved, by Minnie; who had caused these fond musings on the part of Dorothy. And yet, how could these things end? What trouble must be his or theirs? A plurality of wives being impossible, how could all four be happy in their love? Eh, sirs! but this is a tiresome, captious world, loaded to the muzzle with cross-purposes, feeding those who dwell upon its slippery places with bitter herbs, delighted if only it can harry the sojourners upon its surface with pointed darts. Yet at times it is very dear—"a sort of heaven

half-ruined," in which love is the central star, a guide that is at times faithful, but oftener than not leading on to madness and despair.

Dorothy was so buried in her thoughts that she did not heed a step on the thick sward, nor was she aware that Miss Lander stood at her side.

Miss Lander dwelt in a snug house, standing in its own meadows, three fields or so distant from Barton Hall. She was an old maid, rich and tender-hearted, who, it was supposed, had in earlier days suffered from a deep and unrequited passion, one which had never been quite subdued, but had been nursed to the detriment of other suitors. She was past fifty, and rich, and therefore it was that Mrs. Claydon-Piggott had desired her presence at her little party. The old lady's plain features would have acted as a foil to Henrietta's good looks, and being rich and without near relatives,

might she not take it into her head to adopt one of the girls, or leave her something handsome when she died! More improbable things had happened, and in any case Miss Lander was a person whose friendship ought to be cultivated.

Not in good sooth that there was the slightest chance of Miss Lander doing anything so foolish. She was sharp as a needle, and could value the intention of Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's hospitality to its remotest decimal. But, if too sharp to be made the cat's-paw wherewith Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's chestnuts might be drawn out of the fire, she was far from being destitute of sympathy. In fact, her predilections once engaged, she was made up of sympathy. Dorothy's mother had been her friend—first in the nursery and afterwards in the schoolroom; and, since that friend had been removed, Dorothy had occupied the warmest corner of her heart.

Miss Lander stood beside the girl, watching her abstracted face, and she, too, fancied that the parted lips shaped some name like that of Martin. Ah well, she thought, why not? His father and mother come of a good stock, and the lad himself seems honest.

"Dorothy, my love," she said at last, "you have chosen a happy spot for pleasant dreams."

The girl sprang from her seat in some confusion.

"To tell you the truth, auntie"—for so Dorothy often called Miss Lander—"I must have been dreaming. And I meant to have done so much this afternoon!"

Miss Lander took her hand and led her to a garden-bench.

"Is your father at home?" she inquired.

"No, auntie; I am quite alone."

"And perhaps a wee bit tired after your duties last night?"

"Perhaps a little. But the party went off very well, don't you think?"

"Nothing could have been better, my love. I suppose none of the gentlemen have as yet called to inquire after your good looks?"

"Of course not, auntie! What could have put such an idea into your head?"

"Possibly I was dreaming of old times," returned Miss Lander thoughtfully. "But things are so changed since I was a girl. When I was young, our partners walked home beside our chairs, kissed us on the doorstep, and called the following morning to make inquiries."

"O auntie, didn't you dislike it very much? And what a lot of kisses you must have had to give!"

"Not so many, my dear. We danced minuets in those days, and had but one or two partners all the evening."

"But the kisses, auntie?"

"Well, my dear, we were used to it, and should have thought the way you young people waltz far more improper."

"What a curious thing fashion is," said Dorothy, "making that proper during one generation which is considered improper the next."

But Miss Lander was not one to philosophize. When she was a girl, people had accepted certain dogmas as infallible, nor disturbed a simple faith by windy speculations.

"It would be pleasant, my dear," she remarked, "to have afternoon-tea where we are sitting—far pleasanter than in a hot room."

"I told Purcell to bring it to the cascade, and no doubt he will be here in a few minutes."

And presently came the tea, and who should appear almost simultaneously with the tea but Martin and the Globe-trotter. Miss Lander looked furtively at Dorothy,

and saw that the bloom on her cheeks assumed a deeper tone, whilst her long lashes drooped shyly. So faint an emotion might be the effect of mere pleasure; but it might also be the symptom of a dawning consciousness. Miss Lander could not make up her mind as to which of the two it was to be attributed — its traces so quickly disappeared.

Martin threw himself upon the ground, whilst the Globe-trotter disposed his person somewhat awkwardly upon a camp-stool. The latter was not in the habit of making afternoon calls. Indeed, the only houses which he visited were Barton Hall and Moorfield, the abode of Miss Lander. To these he had been introduced by Martin, over whose career he watched like a hen does the solitary duckling which she has hatched, and which, true to its instinct, betakes itself to the weed-grown pond. Not that the Globe-trotter, either in the

case of Barton Hall or Moorfield, was often present at such grand doings as those of the previous night: but he would drop in quietly of an afternoon, or return with Dorothy and her father after church on a Sunday evening. And at such times he felt that he was welcome. Mr. Grierson appreciated his common sense, Dorothy liked him because he was so attached to Martin, and Miss Lander thought him a safe guide for young people.

"Mr. Macpherson," cried Dorothy, as she poured out the tea, "you will be sure to come to the Locksley Archers on the twenty-first?"

"An' what day o' the week may that be, Miss Dorothy?" said the Globe-trotter, seeking to gain time in which to fabricate a polite refusal.

"Next Tuesday," exclaimed Martin.

"I think, Miss Dorothy, that I have an engagement that vera day."

Dorothy held up a warning finger, suggestive of a disbelief in the validity of any such excuse.

"You see, Miss Dorothy, such grand doings are not for the like o' me. I'm no fitted for them. I've mostly spent my days under the open sky, an' with different sort o' folk, an' feel fretted amid a blaze o' candles an' fine dresses."

"By the bye," exclaimed Miss Lander, "that reminds me of something about which I want your advice. I have been reading a most interesting article in a magazine which I take in on one of the most interesting topics of the day, and which treats of the great difficulty which most fathers experience in finding good openings for their sons. Now, Mr. Macpherson, you have been a settler, and have seen, I understand, something of the world?"

"I'm o' that opinion, mysel'," observed

the Globe-trotter dryly. "But maybe I'm mistaken."

"In my young days," continued the good lady complacently, "no such question had arisen. The East India Company wanted cadets; nominations could be obtained to the navy, and commissions in the army; the Church offered a greater scope to men of even moderate attainments. But all that is changed. There is stronger competition, and every position which will enable a man to keep body and soul together is besieged by a crowd of applicants."

"What you say, ma'am," assented the Globe-trotter politely, "is nae mair than truth."

"And now, poor fellows!" she went on sympathetically, "so many young men are obliged to emigrate. It makes one's heart ache to read about their having to associate with inferior people, of no education and of but little refinement: of their having

to live in weather-boarded or perhaps sod huts; and being compelled to cook their food. It seems so sad, Mr. Macpherson."

"Weel, ma'am, tastes may differ: but I dinna think that the young gentlemen need cause a single tear to spring into your kindly eye."

"The writer of this article speaks so nicely about them. He declares that the conduct and habits of young men fresh from England form the subject of much comment amongst the neighbours for some time after their arrival, and that they are *so* different to the rough people amongst whom they are thrown. He states that they are frequently requested by the more respectable inhabitants to allow themselves to be brought forward as representatives in the House of Assembly."

"An' that's very kind of the respectable inhabitants," remarked the Globe-trotter demurely.

"Is it not? Then he goes on to say that the influence which they exercise on the Assembly by their temperate, educated, and refined language is magical. That they raise the tone of debate, and elevate the aims and objects of the legislature."

"Weel, ma'am, it's a wonder that such young gentlemen dinna stop at hame, an' mend the House o' Commons. I've been told that it wouldna be any the worse, but rather better for a bit more elevation."

"Ah, Mr. Macpherson! What you say is very true. We live in times that would have hurried our fathers to an early grave. But the gentleman who writes in the *Cosmorama* proposes that our young men, in order to be more efficient when they arrive in the colonies, should go to a college in England, where they can learn not only the geography and geology of their future home, but its history and laws. Really, it appears to me a most commend-

able idea, and I should like to take shares in an institution of the kind."

"Aye; but, ma'am, I'm thinking as you'd best keep yer siller in yer ain pocket."

"But consider the good that might be done!"

"Weel, I dinna see the good, mysel', for a' it looks sae fine on paper. Take the laws, ma'am. A colony makes a hundred or more in one session, that's nae sic an extraordinary thing for it to do. Weel, a young man, at the college you speak about, would have to master a new Act o' Parliament every three days o' the year, to say nothing of what's gone afore. Let alone geology, which they dinna pay much heed to in the colonies. He couldna do it, ma'am! An' it wouldna be much good to him if he could," added the Globe-trotter decidedly.

"The first thing that a fellow has got to do is to earn his daily crust, eh, Globe-trotter?" suggested Martin.

"Nae doubt about it, laddie."

"And all that about getting into the Assembly and elevating its representatives?" queried the other.

"Naething but bunkum," exclaimed the Globe-trotter warmly. "You might as well try to shear a hundred wethers in twelve hours by reading about it. Talk like that to a colonist, an' he'd be tempted to make you swallow yer ain words. Eh but, laddie, most people this side the water are vastly ignorant about the colonies."

"Come, Mr. Macpherson," interrupted Dorothy; "don't abuse the old country. You have a great inclination that way."

"Weel, Miss Dorothy, I'll say no more. Nae doubt, the least said, the soonest mended."

"But you must do penance for what you have already said," retorted Dorothy. "You must promise to see the archery on Tuesday—the dance afterwards you shall be

spared." And the girl accompanied her words with a smile which it was impossible for the Globe-trotter to resist.

"I'll promise ye to be at the shooting; but I doubt, Miss Dorothy, you're making a young fool of an old man."

"Don't think that!" cried Dorothy eagerly. "It will give us real pleasure to see you."

"You're very kind, lassie. And there's my hand to it." Saying which, the old fellow held out his scarred and knotted palm, which Dorothy pressed in her own soft fingers. To the Globe-trotter such a compact was as valid as an oath, and, come weal come woe, he was sure to be present on the twenty-first.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOCKSLEY ARCHERS.

On the morning of the twenty-first a right royal sun beamed down on Dorothy as she flitted from archery-ground to still-room, from conservatories and fernery to an endless array of flower-vases, which stood on a long table in her boudoir. It was a lovely morning, one which gave promise of an equally lovely afternoon. At least, so thought Dorothy, and she was rendered happier by the thought, for an outdoor entertainment at Camptown was often freighted with great anxiety. Threatening clouds would obscure the sky or the turf be surcharged with moisture. People would

hesitate to come before evening; or, if they did come in the afternoon, would arrive so late as to be unable to compete at the targets, would eschew the dank turf, and confine themselves to the gravelled paths. So Dorothy, that morning, was bright and cheerful; her exertions were nearly sure to meet a due reward; and the gathering to be as well attended as any meeting of the Locksley Archers that selfsame year.

Early in the forenoon Miss Lander dropped in to assist in the arrangement of the flowers, and presently came Martin, to see that the targets were properly pitched, that the marquees were thoroughly secured, and the garden-chairs grouped in the most shady corners. Which done, he sped between conservatory and boudoir, laden with flowers, ferns, and other greenery, to supply what appeared to be a constant, never-failing want. Dorothy, then, was supremely happy, and Miss

Lander, good soul, rejoiced to watch her smiling face. So busy had all three been that the gong sounded for lunch long before it was expected.

After lunch, Martin strolled once more to the archery-ground, to see that everything was in perfect order. Then he lighted a pipe, and stretched himself at full length beneath a tree. He began to think about Chudlegh and many things; of Agnes, and how like she was to Dorothy; of how much the two girls would love each other, when he had won his bride and brought her to some pleasant home near Barton Hall; of the happy hours they would all spend together. Nor did he forget the Globe-trotter, who should always find a warm corner by the hearth ready to receive him. And, after all, it might not be so very long before these things could be. The business in Fosset Lane had been doing so well, that possibly, when he went to Chudlegh at

Christmas, he should be in a position to overcome Mrs. Hardyng's scruples, and to clench the matter by a bold stroke. At this stage of his reflections, his pipe went out, and he lit another; forgot Dorothy, and dreamed of Agnes—of her fair hair and teasing ways; of the long time they had loved each other; of the many hours they had spent beneath the weeping willows alongside Sir Christopher's old stews; of how she cared for him even now, albeit he was not the glittering soldier he had once hoped to be; of all which things he dreamed and dreamed, forgetting where he lay and how time went; forgetting even the archery meeting, until two quaint old figures, bustling about the targets, caused him to spring up hurriedly and run homewards to don the Locksley uniform.

For the Locksley Archers possessed a uniform, and were mulcted in a heavy penalty should they not appear in *grande*

tenue. They enjoyed the assistance of a gentlemen's committee and a ladies' committee, both of which met in early spring, and determined the costume for the approaching season. In one respect only was the power of these committees limited. Green has been, and must ever be, the one colour associated with the sylvan sport. From the days of Friar Tuck and Maid Marian—perhaps from the time of Hagar and that wild Ishmael who dwelt in the wilderness—green has been as indispensable to an archer as the yew bow or quiver full of arrows. No doubt, when the guild first sprang into existence, the gentlemen's committee found it a difficult matter to accommodate the green jerkin, plumed hat, buff boots and belt of the typical forester to the usages of a later society; to devise a green costume which should harmonize with the silk hats, frock-coats, and tweed trousers of its generation. But the diffi-

culty was not insuperable. The committee ordered each gentleman of the guild to appear in a cap of dark-green cloth, enriched by a band of gold-lace; to wear a broad green ribbon across the chest; and to adorn his white waistcoat with gilt buttons. The other and very necessary portions of their uniform might be selected at discretion from their several wardrobes. The effect attained may have been akin to

> "a party-coloured dress
> Of patch'd and pye-ball'd languages:"

but it satisfied the inventors; and thenceforward the gentlemen's committee, so far as dress was concerned, dragged out a purposeless existence.

But that could not, with any truth, be said anent the ladies' committee. This met every year, and its debates were lengthy. The Lady Paramount—the youngest married lady in the guild, and who acted as chairwoman—would probably desire the white

feather in last year's hat to be exchanged for a green one. The lady whom she had succeeded would desire to see the present white seagull's wing superseded by the more elegant drooping tail of the barndoor fowl. Possibly Mrs. Bolitho would suggest that the green jacket of the previous season had fallen out of date, sat too closely to the figure, and should be adjusted to meet a more recent fashion — for Eva, Mrs. Bolitho's daughter, had no figure to speak of, and a jacket made to hang somewhat looser would not permit her deficiency in that respect to be so conspicuous. To which Mrs. Claydon-Pigott might reply, that any alteration in the jacket would be a waste of money, and that mothers with two or more daughters in the guild could not afford such frequent changes; for Henrietta had a trim little waist, and nothing could display it to so great advantage as last year's shape. Then, Miss Poppleton, who

was rich, but fair and freckled, suggested at every meeting that the green scarves and sashes which were worn in the evening would be more becoming if of a deeper shade. With which Miss Graham, who was a brunette, as invariably disagreed. "You have the best taste in the world, dear Miss Poppleton; I am willing to admit that, but you must permit me to say that in the present instance you are mistaken." In case there should be a change in the pattern of their hat, Mrs. Bolitho could recommend Madame Schlegel, of Great Ducie Street—nothing could be in better taste than the bonnet which she had sent to Eva that very spring. "But surely, Mrs. Bolitho," might retort the Lady Paramount, "you cannot prefer Madame Schlegel to Mademoiselle Henrique, of Little Gower Street? I assure you that Mademoiselle Henrique is far more run after than Madame Schlegel." "Do you think so?" would exclaim Miss

Poppleton. "I believed that it had been quite the other way."

And, as these meetings—although nominally confined to a committee—were of so great importance as to ensure the presence of all the twenty-five lady-members of the guild, the debates were prolonged to a late hour. So great, too, were the differences of opinion which the subject elicited, that it is difficult to conceive how unanimity could ever be attained, except on the assumption that the twenty-five ladies had talked until they could talk no more.

The Locksley Archers formed a most select body, were elected by ballot, and fired with envy their less fortunate neighbours. When they married with one of the outer world, or paired amongst themselves, they would retire from active service, and be relegated to the list of honorary members, in order to make way for others eager to join the guild. They were jealous, too, of their

privileges, and, as a body, declined to accept the hospitality of any who stood without the pale of the Association. But, as only a small proportion of the honorary members possessed lawns wide enough, or houses large enough, to entertain them, they were fain from time to time to place upon the honorary list outsiders who had—people whose fortunes had perhaps been acquired late in life, but whose invitations could at last be accepted without fear of social taint.

Fortunate it was for Martin, that afternoon, that he was both young and swift of foot. Even so, he but reached the ground as the archers were being allotted to the several targets, and long after Dorothy had been made anxious by his non-appearance. But there he was at last; and, as she saw him, her face brightened.

"Where have you been, Mr. Ffrench?" she exclaimed. "I thought that you were

never coming. Mr. Bolitho has kept you a place at our target."

"I am glad of that!" he replied, with a smile. "I did not want to be told off to either of the other targets. I see Fanny Pigott is at the furthest, and Miss Poppleton at the one next ours. It's much jollier to keep in one's own set, isn't it?"

Dorothy mentally assented to the proposition, but did not openly endorse it.

"Fanny Pigott," Martin went on, "is for ever taking a fellow behind a tent, or beneath a tree, just when she is wanted; and, as for Miss Poppleton, she is as stiff as though she had swallowed a thousand or two of her own sovereigns."

"Mr. Ffrench! I cannot listen to any such ill-natured criticisms. And see; they are waiting for you to shoot."

Martin was the last man at the targets, and when he had let fly the regulation number of arrows a shrill note given on a

silver whistle notified to the ladies that their turn had come. They took up a position some twenty yards nearer to the opposite targets than the gentlemen had done, and were soon hard at work. An extra prize was to be awarded that day—a gold bracelet to her who made the highest score—and all the twenty-five fair members of the guild were present, each determined to do her best. But, a very few rounds were required to make it evident that ultimate success lay between Dorothy, Henrietta, and Miss Poppleton. The three shot well; kept their bow-hands firm as a rock, and, drawing each arrow to the tip of their ear, were nearly always rewarded by a considerable addition to their score. But they were the exceptions. Fanny, for example, stood full-face to the target and delivered her arrows from the centre of her chest. Miss Graham delivered hers from the level of her waist, and they, describing

tall circles in the air, sometimes hit the mark, but oftener fell, erect and harmless, in the turf.

"Are those my arrows? Thank you, Mr. Ffrench," said Henrietta, who was stationed at the target next to Martin. "Two reds and a blue, I believe."

"Two reds and a blue, Miss Claydon-Pigott," returned Martin.

"Oh no, Mr. Spencer! I will not give you the trouble of holding them. I prefer to keep them in my quiver—yes, really;" and she took them coldly from the hand in which Martin had placed them. "How do you do, Mr. Thompson?" she continued, turning her back on George Spencer. "You are at Fanny's target, I think."

Kidwelly replied in the affirmative.

"*Do* try to make her hold that bow of hers a little steadier, Mr. Thompson. Fanny will never make an archer if she continues to shoot as she does at present."

"I thought she held it so prettily," returned Kidwelly, casting a tender glance towards the girl.

"Do you really think so? I assure you that it is hard to say whether she or Miss Graham shoots in worst style."

"Well, Miss Henrietta, I can but try—if only to please you." And presently he departed, to fulfil his mission.

Kidwelly Thompson himself was but a poor bowman, and his first attempts at instruction were anything but successful. What he did succeed in doing was to make Fanny's hand tremble, and her arrows to fly wider and wider, until at last one flew slantwise across the range and lodged itself in the centre of Henrietta's target.

"What a sad pity, Miss Fanny!" cried the reverend gentleman compassionately. "In the gold, too! If it had only been in our target you would have scored nine."

"My arrows seem to go anywhere but into our target," said the girl ruefully.

"Never mind. I dare say that we shall do better soon." And no doubt he thought so. Henrietta's injunctions had given him a sense of proprietorship in Fanny, and enabled him to endure with greater equanimity the repeated little confidences which passed between herself and Ernest.

In order that their meetings might have a greater semblance of the time when Robin Hood and his merry men haunted the glades of Sherwood, the Locksley Archers had clothed the two officials, who acted as markers, in a neat uniform. David and Jonathan, for so had the pair been christened either by their sponsors or the Locksley Archers—though which was David and which was Jonathan it was difficult to say—were wizened old fellows, with white hair, bent backs, and splayed, shuffling feet. They appeared in tall hats, decked with a

deep band of gold lace; in green, square-cut coats, whose lappets and collars were adorned with similar lace, but of narrower pattern; and in green-plush breeches, white cotton stockings, and shoes with bright steel buckles. They were wont to doff their hats and bow to the ground when a lady-archer was so fortunate as to make a gold; to cry, "a little nearer this way, miss!" when a lady-archer was so unfortunate as to hit the wrong target; or to shout, "a little more powder, miss!" when some untractable arrow found a billet at three-quarter distance from the mark. Quaint, old-world fellows they looked, as, peering at the targets, they seemed oblivious of the arrows which, thick as hail, flew about their heads. But, although by long practice David could stand fire as pluckily as Jonathan, and Jonathan could doff his hat when exposed to a volley of ladies' missiles as politely as David, it might be

observed that when the gentlemen's turn came, they stood a little more backward.

The struggle was at its height; and, all the ladies having apparently emptied their quivers, once more the silver whistle was about to order the competitors to cross the ground, when some one exclaimed, "But Miss Fanny Claydon-Pigott has not shot! Where is she?"

"Where can she have gone?" said another.

Kidwelly Thompson knew. He had seen her retire with Ernest to a marquee near the targets. He bounded thither like a deer, and recovered the delinquent, but her alone—Ernest thinking it better to remain for a time in strict seclusion.

"What have you been doing, Fanny?" exclaimed Henrietta, for want of something better to say. "Do be quick—there's a good girl!"

All watched while Fanny adjusted her

arrow and raised her bow. It was a nervous position, nor was Fanny one to submit to an ordeal so trying with unruffled nerves. In spite of Kidwelly's best endeavours, her first arrow flew from the bow at a venture, and alighted about halfway across the range. Her second nearly lodged itself in Henrietta's target.

"A little more to the right, miss. A little more to the right," shouted David, "and you'll make a gold, this time!"

Fanny attended to David's instructions as best she could, but unfortunately directed her aim a little more to the right than she intended. The third arrow went whistling through the air, and, before David could retire from his too-close proximity to the target, embedded itself in his calf, causing him to drop, groaning, to the turf. Fanny's shaft had at last brought down a noble stag.

"Oh dear—oh dear, Mr. Thompson! Is

he killed?" she exclaimed. "What shall I do? Whatever will become of me?"

Kidwelly soothed the trembling girl, and, supporting her on his arm, led her to a chair. Martin ran to a marquee, and pouring a good dose of brandy into the first tumbler that he could find, ran with it to the prostrate David. The arrow had already been drawn from his cotton-stockinged leg when Martin, pushing through the crowd, held the glass to the lips of the wounded man. "Here, David," he said, "drink this. It will warm your old blood."

David appeared to think that it would, and, after draining the tumbler of its uttermost drop, smacked his lips.

"Eh, but, Mr. Ffrench! that's comforting, it is."

"And take this," said George, putting a sovereign into his hand. "I dare say you won't feel any the worse with that in your pocket!"

David's face brightened as if by magic, and he sprang from the ground with more activity than could have been expected from one of his years.

"Eh, but, Mr. Spencer," he exclaimed, when once more upon his legs, "I'd stand to be shot at six days o' the week, if I could come by a sovereign and glass o' brandy for every hit!"

Although the old man did not seem to be much the worse for his misadventure, Fanny declared that she could not shoot again. Neither could Kidwelly Thompson. So they betook themselves to a summer house amid the trees, and left Ernest to amuse himself at the targets.

The little episode was soon forgotten, and the shooting resumed its normal course. The struggle between the three best lady-competitors was becoming very severe. Each had been doing well, but Henrietta kept a slight lead—one so slight, however,

that the advantage might be wrested from her grasp at any moment. At last Miss Poppleton began to exhibit signs of nervousness—and that just at a time when the result attendant upon each arrow was of the utmost importance. After five or six more rounds, she could no longer endure the strain, and ultimately dropped far behind the leading score.

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott had been watching the girls with a jealous eye, and had come to the conclusion that now, if ever, was the time when a little maternal manœuvring might turn the scale in her daughter's favour. Certainly, Henrietta had forbidden her to interfere in the matter of George Spencer, but had given no such instructions with regard to Dorothy. In that quarter no embargo had been laid upon her shoulders, and she was at liberty to attempt a little skilful diplomacy.

"Ah, my dear!" she exclaimed, sidling

up to Dorothy's elbow just as the girl had placed a second arrow in the red. "A little more elevation, and it would have been in the gold."

Dorothy summoned to her assistance all the *sang-froid* of which she was capable, and this time a low bow from Jonathan announced that her shaft had attained its object.

"There, my dear!" continued Mrs. Claydon-Pigott. "Just as I anticipated —a *leetle* more elevation was all that you required."

Then came a shrill note from the whistle, warning them to make for the opposite targets.

"Are you not a trifle nervous, my dear, now that the struggle is so very close? I could not endure such a thing myself. I should be sure to shoot as badly as Miss Poppleton has done for the last few rounds. I wonder how Henrietta can stand

it—but then, few girls have a nerve like hers."

Dorothy would gladly have turned a cold shoulder on Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's impertinences, but she was hostess, and must endeavour to be civil—cost what it might.

Again it was her turn to shoot, and she was about to let fly her first arrow when Mrs. Claydon-Pigott exclaimed—

"Be careful, dear. Henrietta has just made a gold!"

In spite of herself, Dorothy started. Her arrow sped on its way a second or two before it ought to have left the bow, and lodged in the blue. It was too bad! How could she get rid of this old woman of the sea? She felt that she must lose all chance of the prize did some plan not suggest itself before many more arrows had been shot.

But in the midst of her distress an ally presented himself—although none too soon. The Globe-trotter had been watching

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's tactics with disgust. "Deil's in the woman!" he muttered. "She would frighten a cat out o' house and hame."

"Weel, ma'am," he said aloud; "your intentions may be vera good, but I'm thinking that we'd best leave the young people to fight their ain battle. I doubt they ken more about archery than old folks like you and mysel'."

Dorothy looked at him gratefully.

"I assure you, Mr. Macpherson," protested Mrs. Claydon-Pigott, "that I was but advising dear Dorothy for the best. It would be so unfortunate were she to lose the prize from a want of encouragement at the right moment."

"Weel, ma'am," returned the Globe-trotter, unmoved; "your intentions may be vera good. But old folks, like you and me, had best let the young things take their chance, and watch the shooting from

a distance. We canna do much good, and we may do a sight of harm."

"I assure you, Mr. Macpherson——"

"Weel, ma'am; let's say nae mair, but go listen to the band."

Mrs. Claydon-Pigott comprehended that the Globe-trotter was in a humour that could not be trifled with; that, even were she to remain near Dorothy, her little game was checkmated; and that it would be better to yield with what grace she might. So she laid a hand upon her antagonist's arm and prepared to quit the spot.

"If you think, Mr. Macpherson, that we had better leave the dear girls to themselves, pray let us do so. And Dorothy, my dear, please be careful. It would give me *so* much pleasure if you were to win the first prize at your own archery-meeting." Having delivered which parting shot, she allowed the Globe-trotter

to lead her to a seat so far distant from the targets that her power for harm became innocuous.

Whether it was that Henrietta had heard some portion of the foregoing conversation, and had been irritated at her mother's interference; or whether George Spencer, annoyed at the frequent snubs which he had received at her hands, had been paying too much attention to Miss Poppleton; history sayeth not. Certain it was that, about this critical period of the afternoon, her arrows began to strike the target more uncertainly, and lodged in the blue and black more frequently than they should have done. Dorothy, on the contrary, shot better than her wont. Her resolve to win, if win she could, had been strengthened by Mrs. Claydon-Pigott's method of attack. Any wish that she might at one time have entertained for Henrietta's success had been dissipated; her spirit had been

roused, and she determined to do her very utmost to head the score.

Soon, the last arrow had been shot, and all waited impatiently for the result. In a few minutes it was announced—

Miss Grierson, 489. Miss Claydon-Pigott, 475. Miss Poppleton, 452.

"I am so glad, Dorothy," whispered Martin. "I heard all that the old woman said, but didn't see my way to help you. I'll run to tell the Globe-trotter—he'll be awfully pleased!"

"It's dreadfully hard lines, Miss Pigott," said Spencer. "And you shot so remarkably well! 'Fore George, I'll offer a bracelet myself at the next meeting that the governor gives, and you will be sure to win that."

Henrietta gave him one long, never-to-be-forgotten glance, as she murmured—

"I don't care for the bracelet, Mr. Spencer. I should care much more were I to lose——"

And then she paused; nay, refused, even at his most earnest solicitation, to disclose what that thing was which she feared so much to part with. Nor could Spencer remain at her side for more than a few minutes. The ladies were drawing towards the Hall, there to change their green-silk jackets for green scarves and sashes, and replace their long-plumed hats by sprays of real or artificial flowers.

It was a grand old house for a dance. A wide hall ran through its centre, with a large parquetry-floored dining-room to the left, and a drawing-room of similar dimensions to the right. Then, there was a broad terraced walk outside the ball-room windows, whilst chairs had been placed under the trees—their whereabouts suggested by Chinese lanterns which hung from the lower branches.

Dorothy found no lack of partners, and of course Martin was among the number.

"I like to dance with you, Miss Grierson," the young fellow told her. "You are more like the girls I know at home than Miss Claydon-Pigott, and some of the others."

To which Dorothy made no reply; but was glad that he should think so, and perhaps enjoyed herself the more in consequence of a speech so pretty.

Fanny, also, enjoyed herself. She had two swains at her feet, both dying to receive her slightest smile. No doubt she had pledged her troth to Ernest. No doubt he had won that heart which could never love again. But Mr. Thompson appeared *so* devoted; he had been so very kind in the afternoon, that she could not altogether neglect him, or endure that he should pine in lonely corners. So she bestowed upon him little favours which he accepted in such a manner as to cause her sympathetic heart to flutter respon-

sively, and make the evening seem far pleasanter and shorter than had she but accepted Ernest's admiration.

On the other hand, George Spencer found Henrietta more unapproachable than ever. She seemed to have forgotten that bright, never-to-be-forgotten glance flashed at him an hour or two before. It was already twelve o'clock, and she had only favoured him with a single dance. Then, where could she be now? She was not in any of the rooms. She must be out of doors—on the terrace, perhaps, or seated with some fellow beneath one of the many trees. The girl began to haunt him. What could she mean by looking at him so softly one moment, but to snub him the next? He determined not to be so fooled any longer. None of the girls whom his mother invited to stay at the Cedars treated him like Henrietta was doing. On the contrary, they smiled sweetly when

he entered the room, hung upon his every word, and worshipped his very boots.

He passed through the ball-room window, and sought her upon the terrace. She was nowhere to be seen. He wandered about the lawn, looked under every tree, and was about to give up the search as vain, when at last he espied her, sitting in a far corner with Frank Copeland.

"I have been looking for you everywhere, Miss Claydon-Pigott," he exclaimed.

"Really! How good of you to take so much trouble."

George bit his lips, for the tone of her voice was not calculated to allay his irritation. However, he continued—

"Will you give me the next, Miss Pigott?"

"Thanks, Mr. Spencer; but just now I prefer to sit here. The air under these old trees is so very delightful; don't you think so, Mr. Copeland?"

George Spencer turned abruptly on his heel, and stalked gloomily towards the house. From that hour he would think no more of Henrietta, but would devote his attention to Miss Poppleton. True, the latter was not nearly so good-looking as Henrietta, but she was rich and, at all events, her manner was more pleasing. At the same time,

> "Great actions are not always true sons
> Of great and mighty resolutions;
> Nor do the bold'st attempts bring forth
> Events still equal to their worth."

Later in the evening Henrietta chanced to be his *vis-à-vis* in a set of lancers. He thought that her manner betrayed a certain dejection and signs of contrition. Before the set was over, she had given him yet another thrilling glance, and the image of the freckled, rich Miss Poppleton became once more dimmed.

CHAPTER VI.

MARTIN ENTERTAINS.

Four months had elapsed since the archery party at Barton Hall. Yet, even in so few weeks, a warm July sun had given place to damp November fog; the full-foliaged trees had been transformed into soot-begrimed, stunted skeletons; a clammy dew covered both post and rail; cobwebs, water-laden and forsaken, hung suspended in the leafless hedgerows; outside walls ran down with reeking sweat; dense clouds of smoke from a thousand tall chimneys obscured the blue vault above, and rested, a darksome pall, at a short space from earth; summer had bowed itself before the throne of

autumn, and autumn already cherished at its breast a long-lived winter. Camptown looked woe-begone and drear. Its highways were steeped in mud—its footpaths studded with watery pools or thick-coated with slushy gravel.

On a Saturday afternoon towards the end of the month, Martin was sitting with the Globe-trotter and Frank Copeland in the front parlour of Mrs. Toler's corner mansion. A bright fire was burning in the grate, and the remains of a midday meal strewed the table. The Globe-trotter occupied an easy chair—comfortably lounging in its deep recesses, and perhaps thankful to find himself in quarters thus snug and dry. Copeland sat before the hearth; his feet upon the fender, both elbows upon his knees, his head supported on both hands. He was gazing reflectively at the coals, which crackled, and spluttered, and shot tall tongues of flame through the narrow

register. He was unusually silent, and forgetful that he was not alone. Martin stood by the window, chafing like a caged lion, and busied with the uninviting prospect which lay beyond.

Nor was the outlook calculated to raise his spirits. Countless pools of water half-screened the sodden, deserted field beyond the little garden. The clouds were so low and dense that it seemed as if a cricket ball might be thrown to reach them; and as if, once thrown, it must remain on high, supported by the billowed masses. A driving rain obscured the houses which stood beyond the water-covered field. At times this fell so heavily that the houses were altogether hidden; at times more gently, when they could be seen looming in, what Martin might well take to be, the far horizon. A proper day, surely, for his one half-holiday in the week, and, like so many other Saturdays had been of late,

with but one exception—it was far worse. He felt stifled, overweighted; shrouded by an atmosphere of smoke, and rain, and depleted air. He longed to jump into a train and to rush through space until he could attain a spot in which to breathe more freely—where the pure wind, fresh from some mountain side, would fan his cheek, and where he could find those country sounds and sights to which he had been accustomed. There the rain might fall as it listed. It could not depress him as he was depressed just then. It would come direct from heaven, mingling its fertile self with a grateful earth. It would be untainted by smoke, or noxious gases—a pure gift from above, unpoisoned by man.

"It's beastly weather," he muttered, in his disgust. "There's not even a dog to be seen about the place."

"It might be worse," returned Macpherson philosophically.

"Worse!" exclaimed the other. "Then worse must indeed be bad."

"Hoot, man! You're a bit low the whiles."

Martin left the window and threw himself into a chair. He was in too disconsolate a mood even to light his pipe.

"And what may *you* be thinking about, Mr. Copeland?" inquired Macpherson.

Frank did not immediately reply, but continued to stare gloomily at the fire.

"I'll tell you what it is, Globe-trotter," he said at length. "It's precious hard lines for a fellow to be kicked out upon the world from a home like mine."

"What kind of a home may yours have been?" asked Macpherson kindly.

"A good one,—no mistake about it. Any number of horses in the stable; plenty of shooting, fishing, and everything else that a fellow could wish for."

"And why don't you go back to it, laddie?"

Copeland smiled bitterly. "I'm a younger son, Globe-trotter. When the governor was alive, the place used to be like my own. But he's dead—now," added the young fellow, "and Solomon has ascended the throne of his father David."

"Aye, it's a sad thing to lose a father," said Macpherson. "He's ever the best friend, even in a long life."

"I'm not so sure," retorted the other. "That's the very question that I've been trying to solve."

"As how, lad?"

"Do you think it right that a fellow, who happens by a stroke of luck to be the eldest son, should get all his father's property—barring a few paltry thousands to be divided amongst the younger children?"

"A father may do what he likes with his ain," responded Macpherson. "If you don't admit so much, you strike a sair blow at the root of every man's toil."

"That's beside the question, Globe-trotter. Admitting that a man may do what he likes with his own, is it right for him to do with it what the governor did—to make an eldest son and leave his other children almost beggars?"

"What do you mean, lad, by 'almost beggars'?"

"With a paltry five or six thousand apiece."

"Weel, Mr. Copeland, that depends on a many things."

"But can it *ever* be right, Globe-trotter?" insisted the other.

Copeland was evidently bent upon pushing the question right home. Macpherson therefore relighted his pipe and sought wisdom in its soothing bowl.

"Weel, lad, I think it is," he replied. "Ye see we've got to consider both sides o' the question—the good o' the country, and the good o' the younger children."

"Hang the country!" exclaimed Copeland.

"Nae, lad. We canna do that. The acorn is parent o' the oak, and family multiplied by family constitute a people."

"Well then, go ahead," said Copeland resignedly.

"Ye see, Mr. Copeland, if properties were to be divided equally among a man's children in one generation, they must be subdivided equally in the next, an' the land would come to be split up into patches nae bigger than a hand. An' if it were, the country would be ay the poorer and no one a silver sixpence the better."

"They do it in France," objected Martin.

"Aye, lad! and have to pig with their cows and poultry in the same stable."

"I've often heard that small farms pay better than large ones," retorted Copeland.

"Maybe they do in some cases, Mr. Copeland; but they mustna be too small.

I suppose, now, you've no read Mr. Howard's book anent the peasant proprietors of France and Belgium?"

"Not I, Globe-trotter."

"Then I'll tell thee. The people are worse off as a body than when properties are larger. They live harder, and are too poor to work the soil profitably."

"But is that true?" exclaimed Martin doubtfully.

"Aye, lad, it's true, an' holds good of every country."

"A fellow," said Copeland, "with twenty or fifty acres near Camptown wouldn't be so badly off."

"Not if he'd purchased them or could gie a fair rent, an' had money enough to work them. But, Mr. Copeland, you canna make value by statute, and you canna apportion land by statute. A body must work afore he can eat, and toil afore he can sit by his ain hearth-stane."

"You may be right, Globe-trotter," returned Copeland dejectedly; "but it's hard lines for a fellow like me."

Macpherson chuckled. "Hard lines, I suppose you mean, to begin life with nae mair than five thousand pounds in yer pocket?"

"Exactly so."

"Weel then, I'll tell thee. Ye might be worse off nor that. But most people in the old country are full of notions; and 'it isn't notions sets people doing the right thing—it's feelings.' You've a notion that you've been badly used; that you've as much right as another to a house in town and a place in the country; that it's hard luck if you canna keep a stud o' hunters, and spend your life gadding about for your ain amusement. So you spend five or six thousand in trying to ape folks richer than yourselves; and, your money gone, you must either start again worse off than before, or

hang on to the skirts of another man's coat. You ne'er pause to think until it's too late. You seldom put a shoulder to the wheel until your capital has taken wings. You've no sort o' feeling that you're in luck to have five thousand pounds whilst there's millions that havena sae much; that labour keeps a lad out o' mischief; that 'man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward——'"

"Avast there, Globe-trotter!" cried Copeland, laughing. "Dinna hurl fragments of Scripture at my devoted head."

"Mayhap, lad, you ne'er read your Bible?"

"Not often," retorted the other defiantly.

"Then, you'd no do for a boundary-keeper."

"A boundary-keeper! What on earth may he be?"

"Weel, when first I went to the colony, there was no fencing, and men were stationed in mountain places to keep the

sheep from breaking out o' bounds. They lived in their ain hut, and week followed week without their seeing another face. The man who brought their food, called, maybe, when they were on a distant beat. They dwelt alone, amid rocks, and valleys, and hilly slopes. The bleating of a sheep, the barking of a collie, the pattering rain-drops, the hurtling wind, the rushing torrent, were the only sounds which broke the solitude. They were like to go fou; but, being mostly frae the Highlands, they took to 'The Book,' instead. They read it, an' its words became bedded in their hearts —they lived with it, and ne'er forgot its teaching."

Macpherson spoke as though in former days he had been one of those he alluded to.

"Anyhow," exclaimed Copeland, "I'm not one of the idle fellows you've been talking about. I've put my five thousand into business, and am slaving like a nigger."

Macpherson eyed him kindly. "I doubt, Mr. Copeland, that you're more like Lot's wife than a plantation darkie."

"How so, Globe-trotter?"

"I'm thinking that you're a bit inclined to regret the well-watered gardens o' the plain, and don't hanker so much after a city of refuge."

"I work hard, man!" retorted Copeland impatiently. "What more can a fellow do?"

"I dinna think you ken what real work is, lad."

"Well, I do my best, Globe-trotter!"

"Nae man can do more nor that. But I've seen lads in my country slave the year through if only they could scrape a couple o' pounds or mair together by which to attend a course o' lectures at Edinburgh University. An' I've seen them work late o' nights, when limbs were weary, to improve their stock o' knowledge. They

get on, too; but they dinna waste their time nor siller."

"A man who has been brought up like I have couldn't do that, Globe-trotter."

"Weel, Mr. Copeland, you mun gang your ain gate. But, if you want to get on i' life, you must bend your back to the burden and put your best foot to the front, or may be you'll find others on the road afore you. And you've got a good start, too, lad! You've education, five thousand pounds in your pocket, and a wide world in which to choose your path."

The early November twilight was rapidly fading into darkness, and Macpherson was about to light the gas, when a face appeared at the door.

"If you please, Mr. Ffrench, could I speak to you for a moment, sir?"

Martin rose hastily, and left the room. He was giving a dinner-party that evening, and the face belonged to a waiter who was

necessary to the success of his little entertainment. Mrs. Toler—her former intimacy with Viscount Murdock notwithstanding—had undertaken to boil the fish and vegetables, and to roast the turkey and game, if only Martin would procure the jellies, creams, and other delicacies of a kindred nature from a pastrycook in Camptown. Then the girl, who most days waited upon the Globe-trotter and himself, must, the widow declared, be stationed in the kitchen—there to wash the plates and dishes. So it was essential that, to wait at table, Martin should engage this handy servitor from the cricket-ground hard by.

The waiter led Martin to the back sitting-room, and pointed to the table with evident pride. A candelabrum from the cricket-ground occupied the centre. A plentiful dessert, tastefully arranged in glass dishes —likewise from the cricket-ground, was grouped about the candelabrum. In front

of every chair was a wondrously folded napkin, supported by fish and other knives, plated forks, champagne, sherry, and ruby-coloured hock-glasses—all the property of the club. The little sideboard was covered with more plate, glasses, and an array of empty decanters—*item*, the property of the club. "Really," thought Martin, "it's most convenient to have the pavilion so close at hand. Ten shillings to Raymond for waiting, and ten shillings for the trouble of bringing these things across, will be none too much. In fact, I shall get off cheaply at that."

"Is there anything, sir, in the arrangement of the table that you would like to see altered?"

"Nothing could be better. Ah, you had better put a little more ginger in that dish—they are all desperately fond of ginger. And, Raymond, be sure to have plenty of cream ready to hand with it."

"Certainly, Mr. Ffrench. And, as to the wine, sir? I presume that you would wish that to be handed as usual—sherry with the soup, sir; hock with the turbot; and afterwards champagne—the champagne not to be too much iced, sir?"

"On no account, Raymond! Be careful about that, please. And, Raymond, have you any liqueur glasses for the chartreuse and curaçoa?"

"I am sorry to say, sir, that we have no liqueur glasses at the pavilion. But I have brought some small sherry glasses, sir, which perhaps will do for to-night."

"I suppose they must," said Martin. "You will hand the liqueurs with the apricot-cream."

"If you please, sir."

The entertainment that night promised to be as successful as any that had gone before. Martin himself was in the best of spirits, notwithstanding the depressing effect

of the afternoon. For he was going to Chudlegh the following Monday; the office in Fosset Lane was forgotten, and this little dinner seemed but the commencement of a long holiday, in which visions of home, of Agnes and matrimony, of whirring pheasants and scurrying rabbits were blended in a delightful vagueness.

In addition to the Globe-trotter, Copeland, and himself, he had invited Ernest Clegg, George and Tom Spencer, Kidwelly Thompson, and Joseph Fleming. Fleming had done so much for him at the office, had made his work so much lighter than it would otherwise have been, that he had asked him as a small return for his kindness. Then, he was a struggling, hard-headed young fellow—desirous of rising not only in business but in society—and to lend him a helping hand was the right thing to do.

Mrs. Toler proved herself quite equal to

the duties she had undertaken. The soup was excellent; the turbot boiled to a point; her roasts all that could be desired. Then, Raymond was matchless as a waiter. He moved noiselessly, kept an eye on every plate, and knew intuitively when anything was wanted. The soup had been barely served when all were supplied with sherry. The fish had been scarcely handed when the ruby-coloured glasses stood brimful with hock. Then came the champagne; and with the champagne a babel of conversation.

"What may you be painting now, Mr. Clegg?" inquired Macpherson.

"I began a picture yesterday," said the artist complacently. "I think of calling it 'The Roman Matron.'"

"That's a grand name, lad."

"And what have you done with 'The Dying Gazelle?'" inquired Martin, who had not been to the studio for more than a week.

"It's sold," returned Ernest, more complacently than before.

"Sold!" cried George, laughing. "What! aureolin and all?"

"And who may be the lucky man? And what price did he give, now?" asked Macpherson.

Ernest was nettled by such persistent banter. "Yes—sold," he repeated. "It doesn't matter to whom, and the price is no concern of yours, Globe-trotter. But it was greatly admired, and some of you fellows may see it hanging in a quarter where least expected."

"Weel," remarked Macpherson, "no doubt the age is reckless and superficial; but I didna think that you and 'The Dying Gazelle' would ha' parted company so soon, Mr. Clegg."

"It appears to me, Ernst," interrupted George Spencer, "that you are at last on the high-road to fame. You've grasped the

idea that what the crowd wants is something showy, dashing, and highly-tinged with aureolin. It doesn't care for paintings to be too refined, or to follow nature too closely. It wants bold daubs which give it something for its money."

"Yes," said Fleming quietly; "for one person who reflects, you can find fifty who don't, and who are content to imbibe their thoughts from the one who does."

"I think, Mr. Fleming," exclaimed Kidwelly Thompson unctuously, "that you must except the ladies from your general denunciation. I have always observed that they think so much; that they so often arrive at a just conclusion whilst we poor men are floundering in the mire; that they know exactly when to sympathize, and when to withhold their sympathy; surely, you must except the ladies," concluded the reverend gentleman, sipping his madeira with an evident appreciation of its aroma.

"Ask the Globe-trotter what he has to say about the matter," cried Copeland, laughing.

Kidwelly turned inquiringly to Macpherson.

"Weel, Mr. Thompson," exclaimed the latter, adroitly avoiding the snare, "I'm thinking that you'll be a dangerous man with the ladies."

Kidwelly attempted to look innocent of the charge, but merely succeeded in looking vastly pleased.

"I assure you, Mr. Macpherson——"

"Nay, man, dinna assert what, may be, you canna substantiate."

"Have you been to the Claydon-Pigott's lately, Mr. Thompson?" asked Tom Spencer demurely.

Mr. Thompson blushed to the roots of his hair, and explained that he had enjoyed that honour only yesterday.

"When you, I suppose, were hard at

work upon 'The Roman Matron,' Ernst?" remarked George.

Ernest glanced at the reverend gentleman with anything but an amiable expression. For some weeks he had thought him to have been a more frequent visitor at York Place, and to have been paying greater attention to his betrothed, than was desirable. And now came George Spencer's words to add their fuel to the already smouldering embers of his discontent. He pushed his chair angrily from the table, and exclaimed warmly—

"Deuce take the parsons! They are as bad as the holy St. Damasus himself."

"Who might he be?" cried Copeland, caring nothing about St. Damasus, but enjoying the other's discomposure.

"If you want to know," retorted Ernest, "he was an 'earpicker of ladies'!"

"Really, Mr. Ffrench," expostulated Kidwelly Thompson, "I am not habituated

to such language. Really now, Mr. Clegg ought to apologize. I have no idea what he means by suggesting that I am an ear-picker of ladies, but he has employed such a strong expression with regard to the Cloth that really, you know——"

"Weel, Mr. Thompson," interrupted Macpherson, "I doubt we all understand your feelings about the Cloth. But, lad," he continued, turning to Ernest, "you'd better do what the reverend gentleman wishes. You've allowed your notions to get the better of your judgment."

"The sale of 'The Dying Gazelle' has turned his brain," said George, interposing. "He rolls in wealth. He is 'tall and marriageable.' He declaims, with Gareth—

> "O mother,
> How can you keep me tether'd to you?—Shame!
> Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.'"

All laughed at George's sally—not excepting Kidwelly Thompson and Ernest.

"Another glass of madeira," suggested Martin, seeing that a truce had been virtually concluded, "and then, let us head for the other room."

They found the Globe-trotter's apartment thoroughly prepared for their reception. A couple of card-tables were spread in opposite corners, and a pair of candles stood on each table. In the bow-window was a dumb-waiter, loaded with soda-water, decanters, and large tumblers. "There never was a fellow like Raymond," thought Martin. "He's as good as a dozen other men."

They sat down to whist, and played thereat with varying chance. They smoked Martin's cigars until the clock on the mantelpiece—having struck twelve, then one—was about to strike once more, and announce that it was already two. Then Kidwelly Thompson bethought him that it was time to make a move.

"Really, Mr. Ffrench," he exclaimed, looking apologetically at his watch, "I had no idea that it was so late. Good gracious! It's nearly two o'clock."

"And the Sabbath morn," suggested Macpherson drily.

"Dear me—so it is. Sunday morning!" ejaculated Kidwelly in a bewildered tone. "Good-night, gentlemen—good-night!" and he made a bolt for the door.

"You have a latch-key, I hope," said Martin.

"Yes; I've got a latch-key, Mr. Ffrench. Oh dear, yes! I should never have thought of coming without that." And away hurried the reverend gentleman, apparently hugging to himself a conviction that the possession of a latch-key more than half atoned for the lateness of the hour.

The others soon followed—all, that is, except Copeland, who was stopping in the house. And long after the Globe-trotter

had gone to roost, he and Martin sat over the fire, talking about their homes, hoping that they should have an open season, and pheasants would that year prove abundant. As the clock struck three, even they retired —and the curtain of life descended, shrouding with its impervious folds one more phase in Martin's story.

END OF VOL. I.

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